

2025 Community Health Needs Assessment



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Executive Summary

Shirley Ryan AbilityLab, formerly Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago (RIC), is the global leader in physical medicine and rehabilitation for adults and children with the most severe, complex conditions — from traumatic brain and spinal cord injury to stroke, amputation and cancer-related impairment.

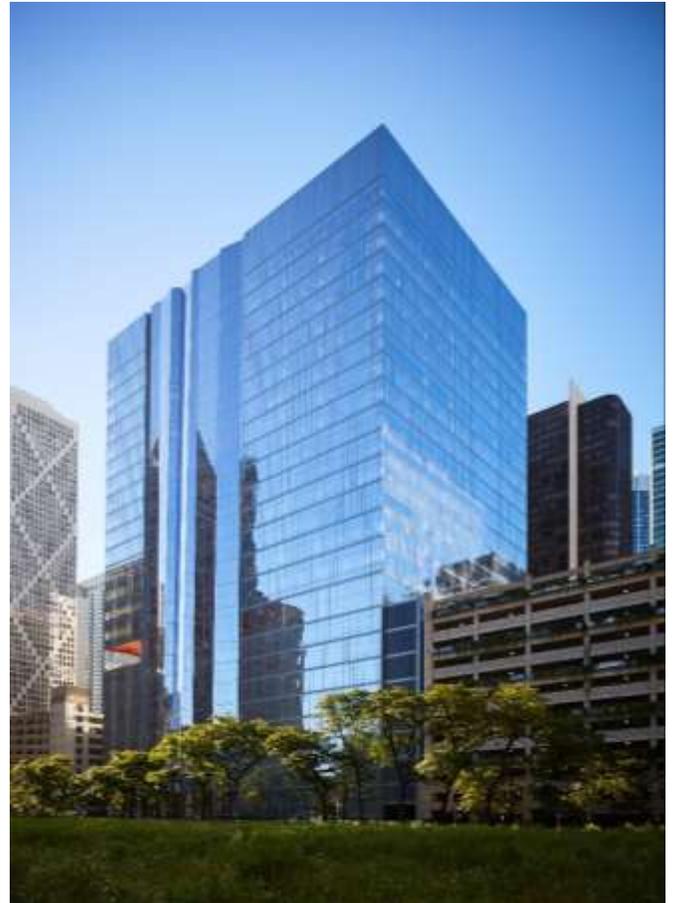
Shirley Ryan AbilityLab is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, as defined by the Internal Revenue Code.

It expands and accelerates leadership in the field — leadership that began in 1953. The quality of its care has led to the designation of No. 1 rehabilitation hospital in America by U.S. News & World Report every year since 1991. No other hospital, of any kind, has held such a distinction for as many consecutive years. Shirley Ryan AbilityLab provides a continuum of care, offering inpatient, outpatient and day rehabilitation (DayRehab®) services.

In accordance with the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act¹ (the Affordable Care Act), Shirley Ryan AbilityLab has conducted five ongoing Community Health Needs Assessments (CHNA or Assessment) — specifically, in 2013, 2016, 2019, 2022 and, now, in 2025 (jointly referred to as Assessments). Each Assessment has taken into account input from a variety of parties representing the broad interests of the community served by the organization. Shirley Ryan AbilityLab reviewed data and articles from a wide variety of sources regarding the community's rehabilitation health needs and hosted a focus group of community representatives.

Based upon prior Assessments, as well as the current analysis and process, the following conditions continue to be identified and form the basis of Shirley Ryan AbilityLab's implementation plan:

- A. Stroke
- B. Spinal cord injury (SCI)
- C. Brain injury
- D. Neuromusculoskeletal
- E. Pediatric
- F. Cancer



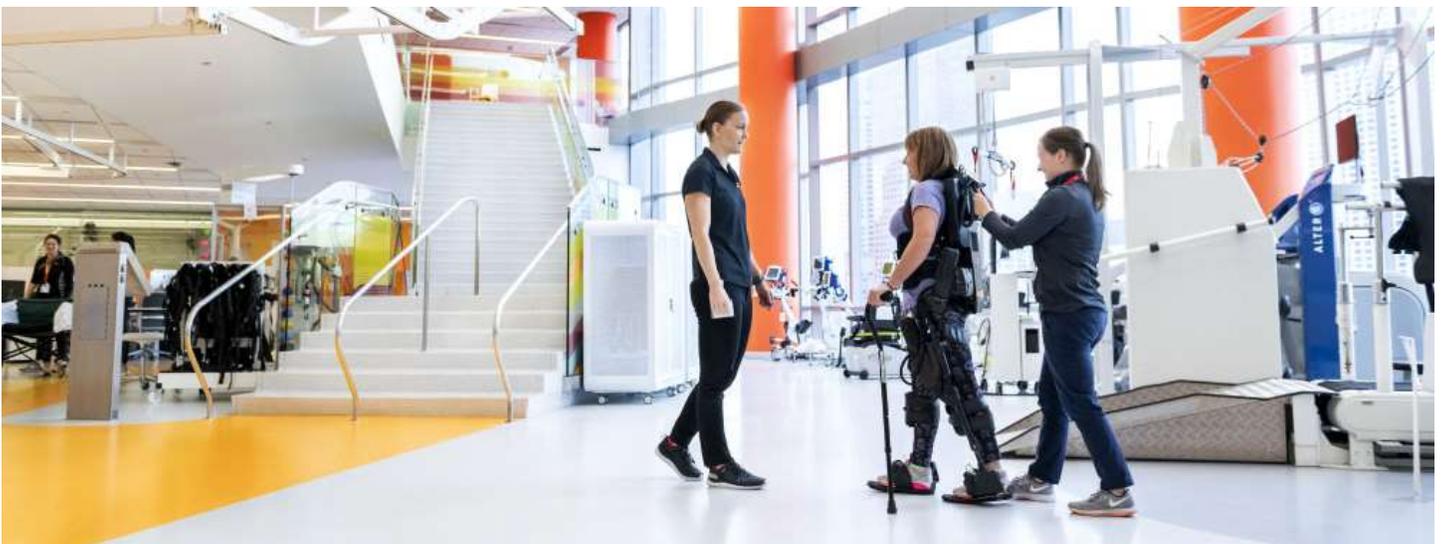
Introduction

About Shirley Ryan AbilityLab

Shirley Ryan AbilityLab serves patients from around the globe. In fiscal year 2024 (FY24), for example, it treated more than 3,700 inpatients and 18,400 outpatients throughout its wholly owned system of care. Shirley Ryan AbilityLab employs approximately 2,600 clinicians, scientists, researchers, administrators and support personnel — an integrated and dedicated team, which in FY24 treated patients from nearly every state in the nation, as well as from multiple countries around the world.

In 2017, the organization opened a 1.2-million-square-foot, first-ever “translational” research rehabilitation hospital — in which clinicians, scientists, innovators and technologists work together in the same space, surrounding patients, discovering new approaches and applying or “translating” research quickly into care. This unique model allows research to have an immediate impact on clinical care, providing patients with the best opportunity for recovery. The translational model and research hospital represent Shirley Ryan AbilityLab’s investment toward realizing its vision to be the global source of science-driven breakthroughs in Human Ability. The community has recognized the organization’s unique, innovative approach to providing rehabilitation through various awards (e.g., Modern Healthcare Design Gold Award, Chicago Innovation Award, the United Kingdom’s S-Lab Award for excellence in laboratory design, among others). However, the most important measure of success is the organization’s progress in evolving patient care and research to achieve better outcomes for its patients.

Care is administered in the hospital’s five innovation centers — Brain; Spinal Cord; Nerve, Muscle & Bone; Pediatric; and Cancer — state-of-the-art facilities offering medical and nursing care and diagnostic support. Patient rooms throughout the innovation centers are fitted with the latest smart-room, mobility and therapeutic devices and equipment.



Meanwhile, in Shirley Ryan AbilityLab's five ability labs — applied-research and therapeutic spaces with the most advanced technology — clinicians and scientists surround patients and collaborate to discover new approaches and apply (or “translate”) research quickly.



Think + Speak Lab: Recovering the ability to think, reason, perceive, swallow, eat, talk, interact with others and make decisions are key for returning to everyday life. In The Robert R. McCormick Foundation Think + Speak Lab, therapeutic care and scientific application combine to help patients recover these building blocks of ability.



Legs + Walking Lab: The Margaret & Mark Stephan Legs + Walking Lab is designed for those with diagnoses affecting lower-body function due to brain or spinal cord injury and diseases of the nerves, muscles and bones. Clinicians and scientists focus on advancing trunk, pelvic and leg function, movement and balance.



Arms + Hands Lab: The Harris Family Foundation Arms + Hands Lab is a robust environment designed for individuals working on recovering and strengthening complex hand and reaching skills. Clinicians and scientists work with patients on advancing upper-limb coordination, movement and function.



Strength + Endurance Lab: The Nancy W. Knowles Strength + Endurance Lab focuses on building stamina and resilience, with targeted therapies for complex motor and endurance activities, coordination and higher-level activities of daily living. Clinicians and scientists work on the integration and processes related to how nerves and muscles function individually, as well as how they interact with the skeletal system.



Pediatrics Lab: In the lively Grainger Pediatric Lab, children and teens with a range of diagnoses work with clinicians, scientists and therapists. Pediatric inpatients and outpatients benefit from the latest technology and best-in-class care in this kid-customized space.

Shirley Ryan AbilityLab offers a robust continuum of care, which includes physician clinics, outpatient care, day rehabilitation care (for patients who no longer require hospitalization, but still need intensive, coordinated rehabilitation care), as well as additional specialized services, such as an ethics consultation, therapeutic recreation, an assistive technology program and a wheelchair seating and positioning center.

SHIRLEY RYAN ABILITYLAB LOCATIONS

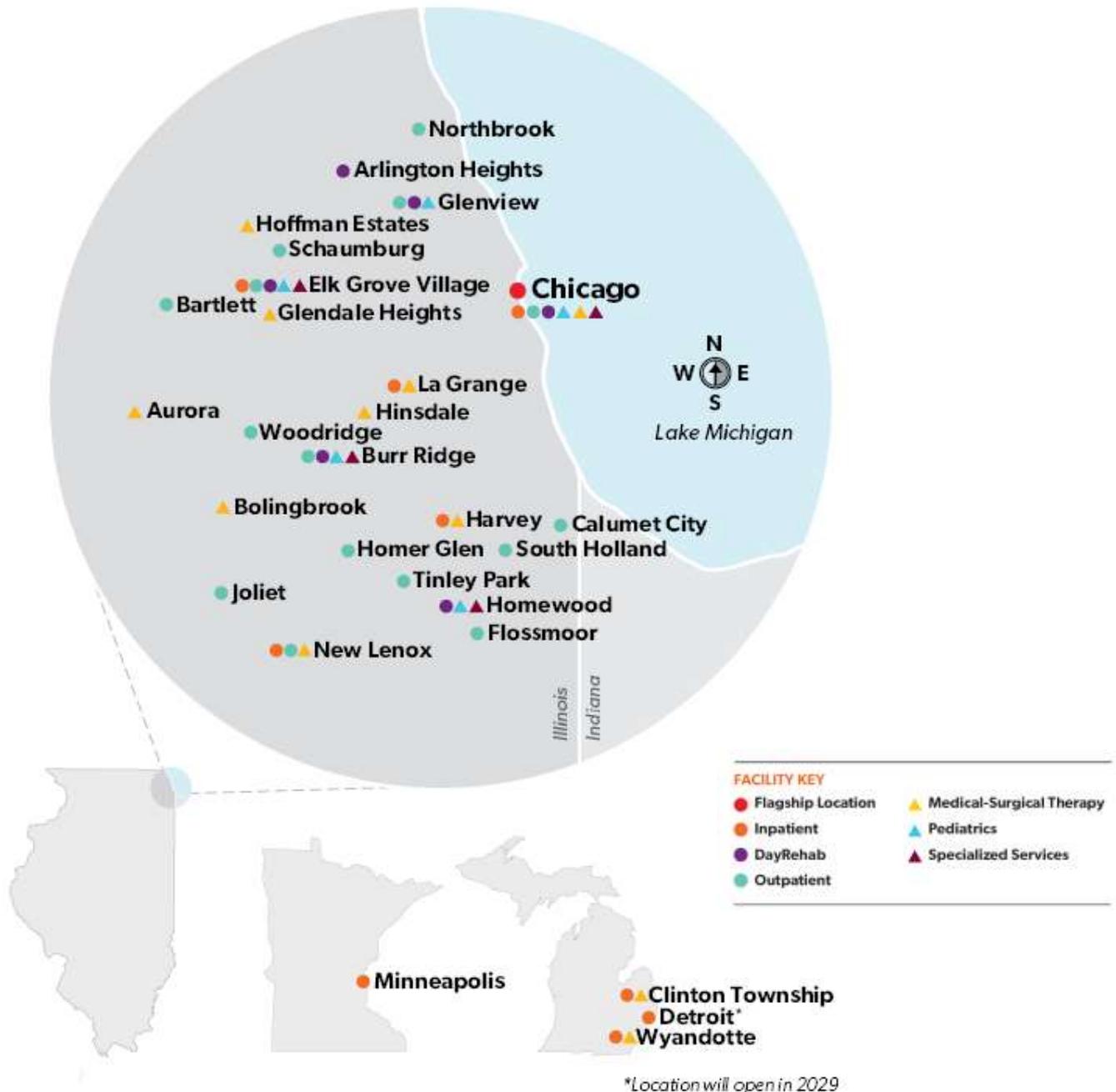


Figure 1. Shirley Ryan AbilityLab sites of care, including its wholly owned sites.



In addition to being ranked the No. 1 rehabilitation hospital since 1991, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab has been recognized by the American Nurses Credentialing Center five consecutive times, earning the prestigious Magnet® designation — the highest national recognition given for nursing excellence. Fewer than 10% of U.S. hospitals earn Magnet designation, with a fraction of these hospitals doing so five times in a row as Shirley Ryan AbilityLab has. Additionally, the organization was the first free-standing inpatient rehabilitation hospital to hold this distinction.

Each year, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab underscores its robust commitment to meeting the community’s needs by implementing the actions identified by the Assessment — and evolving care and services to best serve patients. This report outlines the findings of the 2025 Assessment and provides guidelines for implementation.

The Community Health Needs Assessment Process

COMMITMENT BY THE ORGANIZATION AND ITS LEADERS

Shirley Ryan AbilityLab's 2025 CHNA took into account input from a number of parties representing the broad interests of the community served by the organization. The organization reviewed data and articles regarding rehabilitation community health needs from a wide variety of sources and hosted a focus group of community representatives. It identified continued rehabilitation health needs in the areas of stroke, SCI, brain injury, neuromusculoskeletal conditions, pediatric care and cancer. In response to the significant health needs identified in the CHNA, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab will identify programs and resources and prepare an implementation strategy.

THE COMMUNITY THAT SHIRLEY RYAN ABILITYLAB SERVES

Critical to any assessment is identifying the community being served. To do so, a provider may take into account relevant facts and circumstances, including the geographic area served by the hospital facility, target populations served (for example, children, women or the aged), and principal functions (for example, focus on a particular area or targeted disease). Although, as identified above, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab serves a global patient population, for the purposes of the Assessment, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab identified the community as residents from Chicagoland and Illinois with a need for inpatient, outpatient or day rehabilitation physical medicine and rehabilitation services (including those services for which a rehabilitation hospital is required). Patients requiring physical medicine and rehabilitation services include children and adults with neuromusculoskeletal injuries, brain injuries and spinal cord injuries; those with a need for pediatric rehabilitation, stroke rehabilitation and cancer rehabilitation; and those who have had amputations or who have other limb differences.



This community is further defined by Chicago and the surrounding Illinois counties of Cook, DeKalb, DuPage, Kane, Kankakee, Lake, McHenry and Will, which together are home to approximately 8.5 million people. The area is also home to a diverse population, as shown in Figure 3. In FY24, 17,592 patients were discharged from inpatient rehabilitation facilities (IRFs) located in these eight Illinois counties.

Most patients who receive care at Shirley Ryan AbilityLab are from the Chicagoland area. In calendar year 2024 (CY24), 79% of inpatients, 94% of outpatients, 93% of DayRehab® patients and 91% of patients who engaged in physician visits were from the Chicagoland area.

SHIRLEY RYAN ABILITYLAB’S ROLE IN PROVIDING CARE TO MEDICALLY COMPLEX PATIENTS

Shirley Ryan AbilityLab patients are some of the most medically complex and require intensive rehabilitation care. The Case Mix Index (CMI) provides one measure to objectively determine a patient’s medical complexity. According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, “A hospital’s CMI represents the average diagnosis-related group (DRG) relative weight for that hospital. It is calculated by summing the DRG weights for all Medicare discharges and dividing that by the number of discharges.”² Namely, a higher number indicates more complexity.

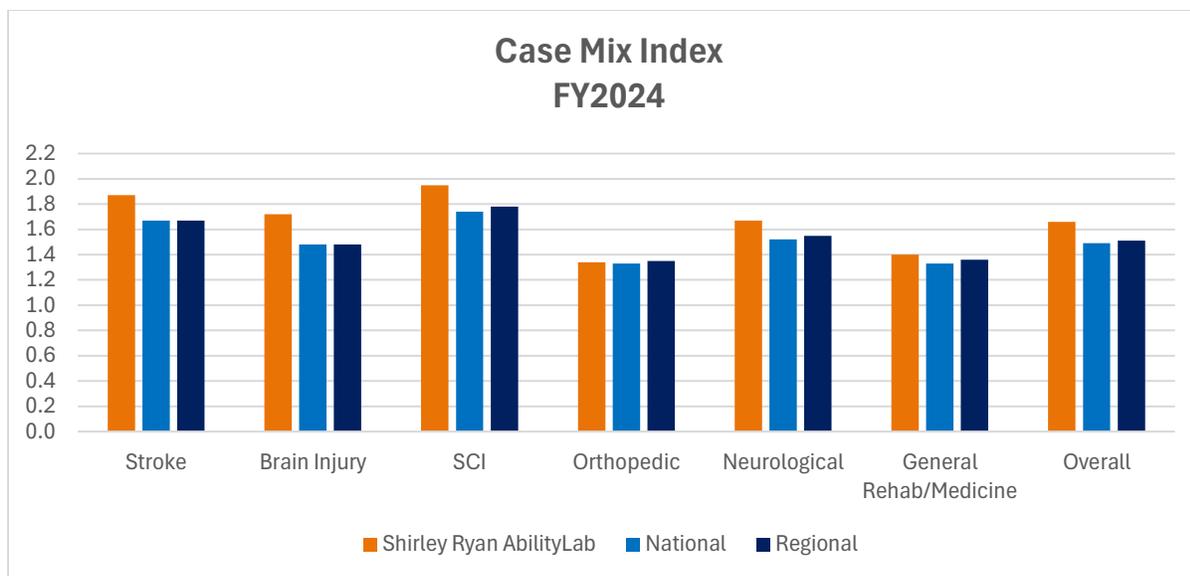


Figure 2. CMI values for Shirley Ryan AbilityLab, the region and the nation for FY24.

AGE AND RACE OF PATIENTS

In preparing the Assessment, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab reviewed age and race information for Chicagoland IRF patients for FY24. Nationally, adults aged 65 and older make up the largest percentage of users of rehabilitation services and, as shown in Table 1, represent the only age group in the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab service area that is expected to increase in population.

AGE COHORT	AGGREGATE SERVICE AREA		
	2024 POPULATION	PROJECTED 2028 POPULATION	% GROWTH
0-19	2,122,842	2,020,243	-4.8%
20-34	1,918,725	1,762,841	-8.1%
35-54	2,483,627	2,400,297	-3.4%
55-64	1,183,175	1,113,712	-5.9%
65+	1,472,495	1,657,615	12.6%

Table 1. Population by age in aggregate service area (source: Advisory Board).



Figure 3 indicates the race and ethnicity of individuals in the Chicagoland area, and compares it with the racial and ethnic breakdown of patients recently discharged from Shirley Ryan AbilityLab as compared with those recently discharged from all Chicagoland IRFs. As the graph indicates, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab sees more patients who identify as African American than do other IRFs in the Chicagoland area.

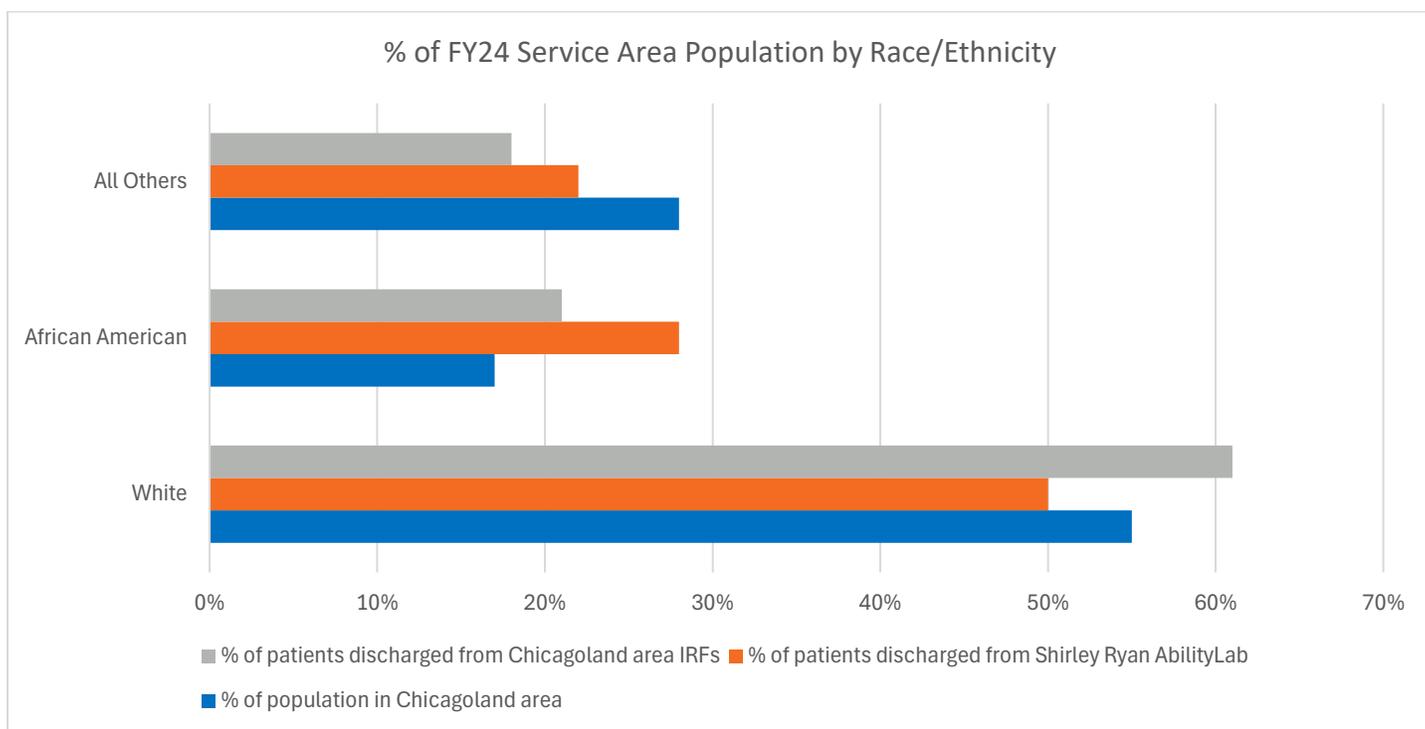


Figure 3. Race and ethnicity percentage of patients discharged from Shirley Ryan AbilityLab and Chicagoland-area IRFs.

Overall, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab’s determination of its community of care for this Assessment took into account the above functional, geographic and demographic considerations.

How Shirley Ryan AbilityLab Conducted this Assessment

Specifically, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab utilized:

DATA & METHODS

Review of Patient Conditions

Shirley Ryan AbilityLab reviewed its patient mix by diagnostic group to determine the substantial health needs of its community. Table 3 is reflective of those admitted on an inpatient basis.

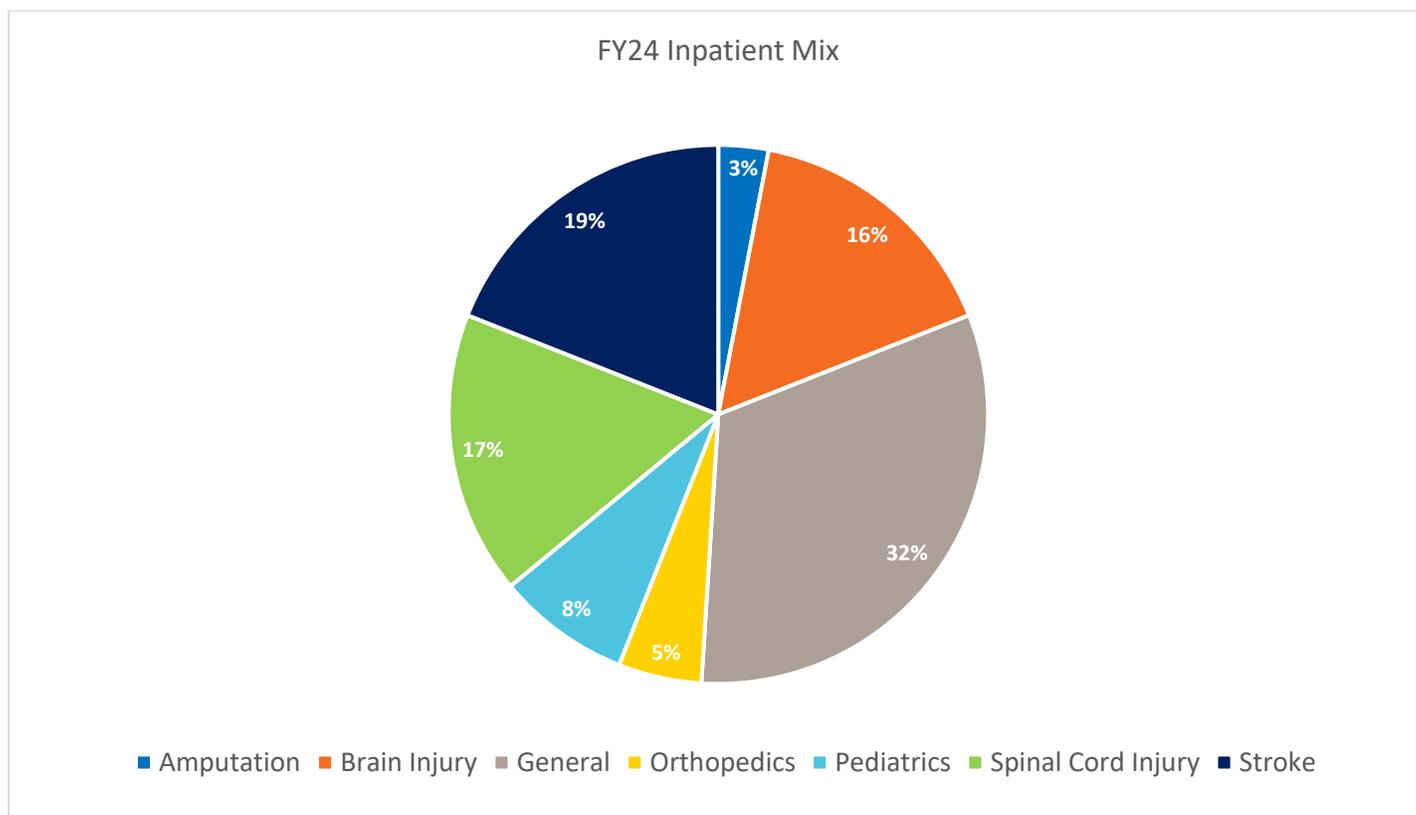


Figure 4. Shirley Ryan AbilityLab patient mix by diagnostic group for FY24.

Literature Survey

Literature in the field of physical medicine and rehabilitation was reviewed to help determine the significant health needs of the community, with a focus on the types of conditions presented by Shirley Ryan AbilityLab patients. Millions of individuals, including those in Shirley Ryan AbilityLab's geographic community, have conditions that require physical medicine and rehabilitation services, such as stroke, SCI, traumatic brain injury and cancer. Nationally, survival rates for many of these conditions — including stroke,⁴ SCI⁵ and traumatic brain injury⁶ — are increasing. In addition, cancer has become a chronic condition with more people than ever living longer with the disease. As a result, the total burden of illness and need for rehabilitation care is growing.

Increased survival rates for various conditions bring new challenges and opportunities in the field of rehabilitation. Patients may experience debilitating fatigue, pain, anemia, memory or concentration problems, edema, and nerve problems that result in the loss of mobility or the ability to perform self-care tasks.⁸ For instance, for many cancer survivors, aggressive, life-saving interventions often take a harsh physical toll.⁷ For patients who have survived stroke, effects differ based on which area of the brain was affected and can include vision problems, memory loss, speech impairments and changes in behavior.⁹ Based on data provided by Illinois Health and Hospital Association’s COMPdata Informatics, the table below identifies the number of patients discharged — and with which conditions — from acute-care hospitals in the Chicagoland eight-county area:

CONDITION	FY21	FY24
Traumatic Brain Injury	6,859	4,555
Neurological Condition	17,357	14,331
Stroke	30,747	32,082
Spinal Cord Injury	2,695	3,019

Table 2. Chicagoland patients discharged by fiscal year and condition.

State and National Statistics on Disease and Disability

In Illinois, more than 2.3 million adults have a disability, equal to 24%, or almost one in four, of the adult population.¹⁰ Disability healthcare costs in Illinois are approximately \$33 billion per year, or up to 33% of the state’s healthcare spending, equaling almost \$19,000 per person with a disability.¹¹ Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that Illinois adults with a disability experience chronic disease at a higher rate than the general Illinois adult population.¹²

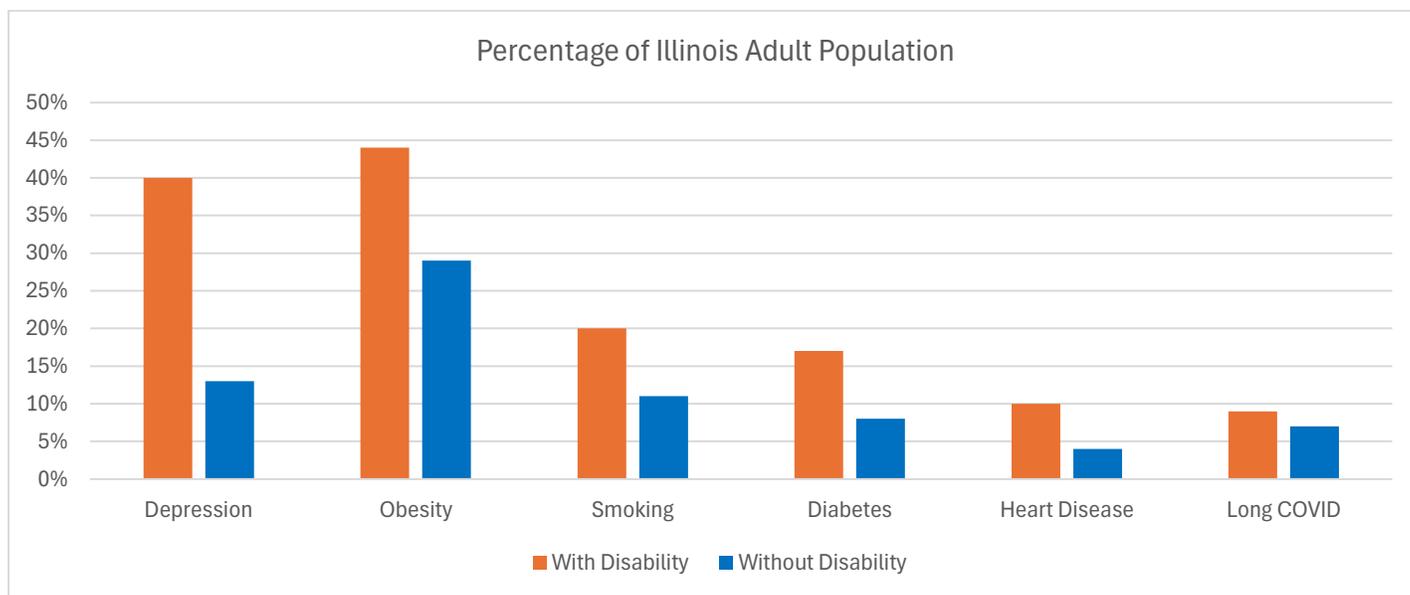


Figure 5. Illinois adult population with and without disability.

Nationally, almost 29% of adults have some type of disability. One in four adults between the ages of 18-44 report lack of a usual healthcare provider and an unmet healthcare need due to cost. At the same time, Illinois adults with a disability are more likely to have a chronic condition and higher risk factors as shown in Tables 3 and 4 below.¹³

CHRONIC CONDITION	ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES	ADULTS WITHOUT DISABILITIES
Arthritis	36.3%	19.7%
Asthma	13.7%	7.3%
Cancer	7.9%	6.1%
Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)	11.6%	2.8%
Diabetes	16.9%	8.5%
Stroke	6.7%	1.6%
Long COVID	9.5%	7.1%

Table 3. Chronic disease prevalence 2022.¹⁴

RISK FACTOR	YEAR	ADULTS WITH DISABILITY	ADULTS WITHOUT DISABILITY
Aerobic Exercise (Inactive)	2019	39.6%	23.8%
High Blood Pressure	2021	38.9%	23.1%
High Blood Cholesterol	2021	36.7%	25.9%
Cigarette Smoking (Current)	2022	19.7%	10.6%
Cigarette Smoking (Former)	2022	23.9%	21.6%
Obesity	2022	43.6%	29.5%
Excessive Drinking	2022	16.5%	19.0%

Table 4. Prevalence of risk factors and behaviors.¹⁵

Focus Group – Consulting with Persons who Represent the Broad Interests of the Served Community

As part of developing its 2025 Community Health Needs Assessment, and in order to assess the significant health needs of its community, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab invited a number of leaders from the health community to participate in a focus group. These leaders included persons with special knowledge or experience in public health; federal, state or local health departments; or agencies with current data or other information relevant to the health needs of the community. Participants included representatives or members of the following populations: medically underserved, low income, minority and chronic disease. Shirley Ryan AbilityLab is grateful for the discussion and input provided by representatives from the following organizations and populations:

- Salute, Inc.
- Shirley Ryan AbilityLab Adaptive Sports Participant with Bilateral Lower-extremity Amputation
- Shirley Ryan AbilityLab LIFE Center Peer Mentor and Stroke Survivor
- Shirley Ryan AbilityLab Parkinson’s Disease and Movement Disorders Program and Fitness Center Participant
- State of Illinois Department of Transportation Disabilities Division Representative and United Spinal Association of Illinois Board Member



The focus group was held March 19, 2025, at Shirley Ryan AbilityLab. Group discussion focused on rehabilitation health needs of people with physical disabilities, as well as access to information and care, research and clinical trials, education and training, and support programs. A detailed description of the participants invited by Shirley Ryan AbilityLab to participate in the Assessment focus group is included in Appendix A.

In order to identify the significant community health needs, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab analyzed information obtained in the Assessment process. Focus group participants were asked to consider the significant rehabilitation needs of their respective communities, which also factored into the Assessment.

Evaluating Actions Based on the FY22 Community Health Needs Assessment

A hospital’s CHNA includes an “evaluation of the impact of any actions that were taken to address the significant health needs identified in the immediately preceding CHNA.”¹⁶ In the FY22 Assessment, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab identified the following significant community health needs:

1. Rehabilitation Health
2. Research
3. Improved Access to Information About Existing Resources
4. Education and Training

These needs were identified and prioritized based on data analysis and feedback provided by the community served by Shirley Ryan AbilityLab. Shirley Ryan AbilityLab has addressed each identified health need, as discussed in this section of the Assessment.

1. Rehabilitation Health: Expanding Access to the Best Rehabilitation & the Best Patient Outcomes

The FY22 Assessment identified a community need for greater access to rehabilitation services given the increasing incidence of conditions that cause cognitive and physical disabilities. Shirley Ryan AbilityLab opened a translational research hospital in 2017. The hospital’s previous 182-bed facility primarily had semi-private rooms, leading to capacity constraints (e.g., due to gender mix and infection control considerations). Upon opening the new facility in 2017, capacity increased to 242 private rooms. In 2019, the Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board authorized an additional 20 beds for a capacity of 262 private rooms.

Data regarding the percentage changes in the number of patients is shown in Table 5 below:

INPATIENTS BY AREA OF FOCUS	INPATIENTS	% INCREASE	
	2022	2023	2024
Brain Injury	119	122%	126%
Cancer	169	119%	99%
Neuromusculoskeletal Conditions	1,087	95%	95%
Other	606	102%	114%
Pediatric	218	112%	121%
Spinal Cord Injury	441	116%	120%
Stroke	648	100%	101%
Traumatic Brain Injury	315	109%	95%
Grand Total	3,603	104%	105%

Table 5. Inpatient data by fiscal year and type.

In addition, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab has increased access to care in its outpatient and DayRehab® settings. Since the 2016 Assessment, ten of its sites have been upgraded and expanded.

Additionally, the organization has:

- Expanded its Streeterville DayRehab space, allowing it to serve many more patients each year. This program has grown 24% from 2022 – 2025.
- Moved its Pain Management Center into its flagship hospital from an offsite location, providing greater access to pain management services for all patients, including upgraded facilities such as a state-of-the-art aquatic center.
- Expanded its outpatient musculoskeletal clinic to provide sports rehabilitation services as well as expanded pelvic health care at a new location. This clinic allows for more patients to access services.
- Enhanced access for patients to transition into wellness and sports performance activities in their community through additional programming and services.

As a result of this expansion, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab has been able to offer access to more individuals. As noted in Table 6 below, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab’s outpatient facilities have seen increased patient visits year-over-year.

FISCAL YEAR	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
DayRehab® Visits	63,439	71,700	81,308	87,575	91,364
Outpatient Visits	95,506	111,009	126,793	135,633	138,029

Table 6. Outpatient visits by fiscal year.

2. Research

As a result of opening its translational research hospital, which embeds research into clinical care, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab’s research program — among the largest of its kind in the world — has expanded considerably. The organization’s research disciplines span engineering, neuroscience and rehabilitation outcomes — among many others. It is renowned for breakthroughs in biomedical, neural, mechanical and electrical engineering; bionics; molecular/cellular biology; robotics and pharmacotherapeutics.

Currently, the research program has more than 300 total research projects underway, of which 144 are externally funded by grants and donations from both public and private sources. Since the FY22 Assessment, there has been a continued focus on and expansion in research.

The table below provides a FY23/FY24 comparison of the portfolio size for externally funded research projects and active awards:

CATEGORY	FY23	FY24
Externally Funded Research Projects (Grants & Clinical Trials)	123	144
Total Active Award Funding	\$153 million	\$169 million

Table 7. Research projects and awards by fiscal year.

Additionally, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab researchers have published hundreds of articles on a wide variety of rehabilitation-related topics from 2022 to 2024.

Shirley Ryan AbilityLab has hired several key roles since the last Assessment. These leaders will continue to expand the research portfolio and ensure that Shirley Ryan AbilityLab stays at the forefront of clinically relevant research. For example, to augment the organization's strength in neuromuscular science, it recruited a young physician-scientist who recently completed Northwestern University's neuromuscular fellowship and is preparing to submit grants to further her research program. She has been paired with an experienced scientist and mentoring team to help develop her grant-writing ability. She has already shown a level of creativity and tenacity that is typically seen in more senior physician-scientists.

Within the past few years, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab has led several notable studies, two of which are described below:

Completed Enrollment in the Largest Human Movement Development Study

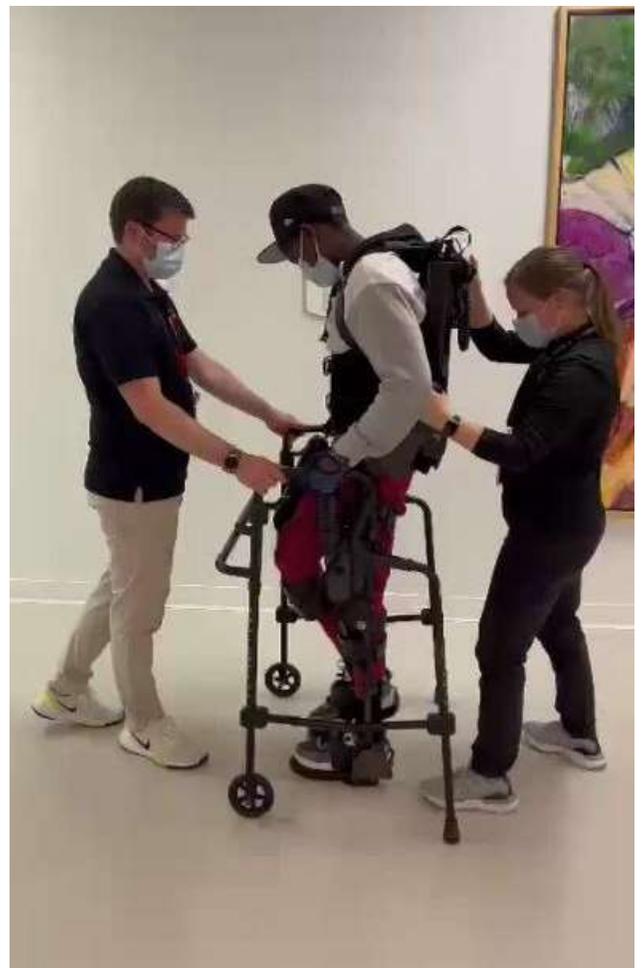
Under the support of a local foundation, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab has enrolled more than 300 babies into a study and is recording their movement data during their first two years of life and combining these data with expert physician diagnosis.

Leveraging sensors to gather data on high-resolution baby movement — a first — the goal is to very quickly diagnose babies with mobility conditions and to intervene early and purposefully so that the infants have every opportunity as they grow.

This multi-million-dollar, years-long research effort represents the largest longitudinal study of infant development in history, and Shirley Ryan AbilityLab scientists will glean novel insights about the development of human movement — something that has never been studied at this level. Findings could revolutionize standard practice in pediatrics by generating broad, foundational and unique data that will be analyzed thousands of times over the course of decades, if not longer.

First-of-its-Kind Drug Study in Patients with Spinal Cord Injury

Shirley Ryan AbilityLab is the sole trial site for a study with NervGen of individuals with chronic and subacute cervical SCI. The study explores NVG-291, an investigational drug that targets the body's natural inhibitors of repair. In June 2025, NervGen released topline data from the chronic cohort of its clinical trial. The study met its primary endpoint by achieving statistical significance on one of its



two pre-specified co-primary endpoints, demonstrating increased electrical connectivity between the brain and hand muscle in individuals with a chronic cervical level SCI.

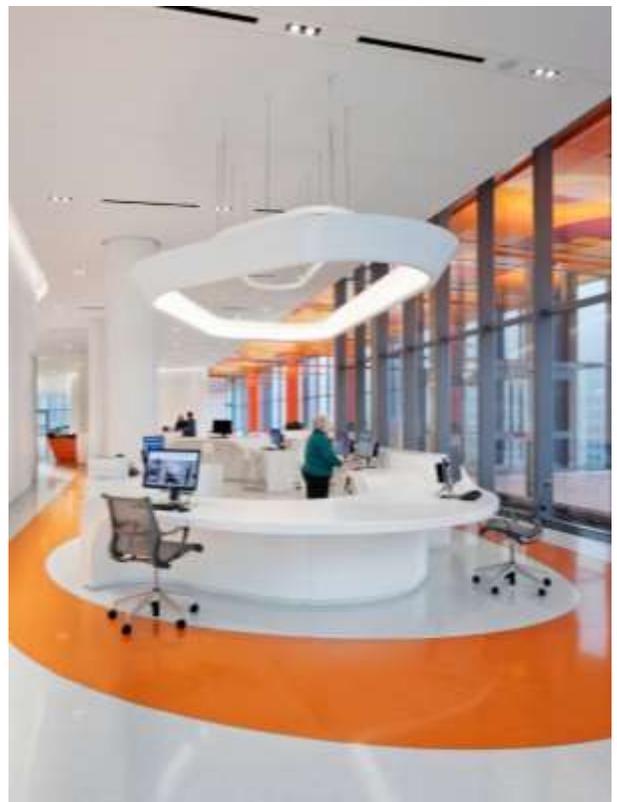
3. Improved Access to Information about Existing Resources

The FY22 Assessment identified the need for improved access to evidence-supported educational materials and information for both the healthcare community and the community at large.

Since 2003, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab's Henry B. Betts, MD, LIFE Center has served as a multimedia education center and virtual education web portal that provides patient education and consumer health information as an integrated component of patient care. The LIFE Center's mission is to provide opportunities for Learning, Innovation, Family and Empowerment for the patient populations, families and community served by Shirley Ryan AbilityLab. All content is designed to provide holistic support to people living with a wide range of cognitive and physical impairments. Knowledgeable, expert staff are available on-site to help patients and visitors find personal connections and trusted resources (such as peer mentors) that are aligned with their needs and can provide guidance throughout their respective health journeys.

In FY22, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab increased community access and visibility of available resources. For example, it mailed an informational brochure regarding the LIFE Center to 50 acute-care/inpatient rehabilitation hospitals. In addition, the LIFE Center hosted a National Council on Disability town hall, providing the 75 participants with LIFE Center information and resources.

In FY24, the LIFE Center's outreach and service efforts totaled 8,772 person contacts. Services provided included individualized patient, family and community education programs, classes, special events, tours and a peer mentor program. The LIFE Center's web traffic in FY24 averaged 14,712 page views per month, with 176,554 page views total. This represented a 12.98% increase from the previous year. Individuals in 188 countries accessed the LIFE Center's website; the highest international web activity occurred in the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, Philippines, India and Germany.



4. Education and Training

The FY22 Assessment noted the continued need for more rehabilitation professionals to address the increasing prevalence of conditions resulting in disability, as well as increased education and training for patients and their families. Shirley Ryan AbilityLab has accomplished this aim through various programs, including the following:

Physiatry Residency and Fellowship Programs and Required Medical Student Rotation

Shirley Ryan AbilityLab is not only a world-renowned translational research rehabilitation hospital, but it's also a highly regarded teaching hospital. It serves as the clinical training home for Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine's Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PM&R). It operates one of the largest — and most prestigious — rehabilitation residency programs in the nation, hosting at least 40 residents each year.

In FY24, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab established a five-year combined residency program in PM&R — the first of its kind in Chicago and one of only four in the United States. This program, offered in partnership with the top-ranked Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago and the McGaw Medical Center at Northwestern University, provides a streamlined path for residents to become triple-Board certified in pediatrics, PM&R and pediatric rehabilitation. By completing this specialized training, doctors can serve children with complex medical and rehabilitation needs without having to complete additional fellowships.

Shirley Ryan AbilityLab also leads five fellowship training programs: in SCI, traumatic brain injury, pediatric rehabilitation, sports medicine and pain medicine. These subspecialty fellowships promote advanced medical knowledge and expertise in PM&R.

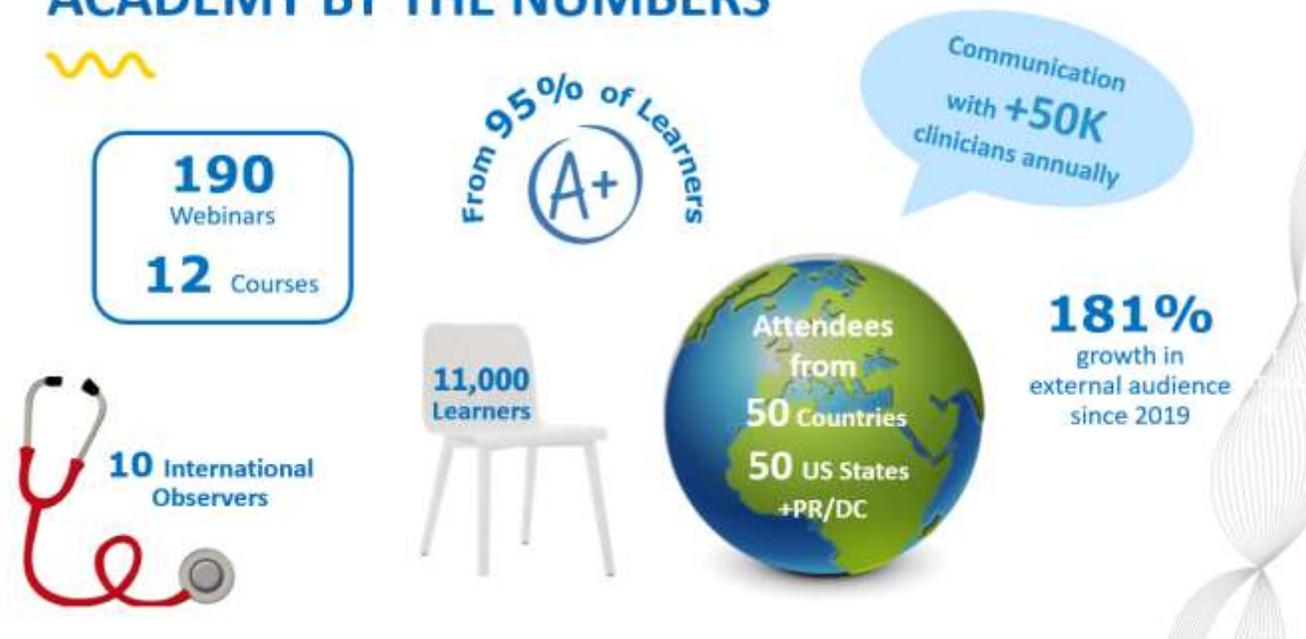
The Shirley Ryan AbilityLab medical education program also provides opportunities for Northwestern's first-year medical students to meet regularly with patients from Shirley Ryan AbilityLab's SCI, general rehabilitation or pediatric programs to gain insights into recovery. Additionally, Northwestern requires fourth-year medical students to complete a two-week rotation at Shirley Ryan AbilityLab in order to understand more fully the needs and care for patients with diagnoses served by the hospital. Approximately 160 medical students participate in this rotation. Finally, approximately 50 additional students from other medical schools request to spend their PM&R elective time at Shirley Ryan AbilityLab during their fourth year of medical school.



Continuing Education Programs for Clinicians

Since 1953, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab has offered continuing education programming through its Academy to help healthcare professionals stay at the forefront of the field. Each year, more than 11,000 students participate in Academy programs, which are taught by interdisciplinary teams of recognized Shirley Ryan AbilityLab PM&R specialists and visiting experts from around the world. These programs cover the latest evidence-based rehabilitation interventions, assessments and discoveries. New courses include those focused on functional neurologic disorders, cognition, vision and pediatric rehabilitation. By incorporating flexible modalities — such as on-site workshops, online webinars and courses — and outreach programs, the Academy seeks to bring the latest insights to healthcare professionals in a format that best meets their learning needs. In 2024, the Academy offered 12 courses and more than 190 webinars reaching attendees from all 50 states and 50 countries.

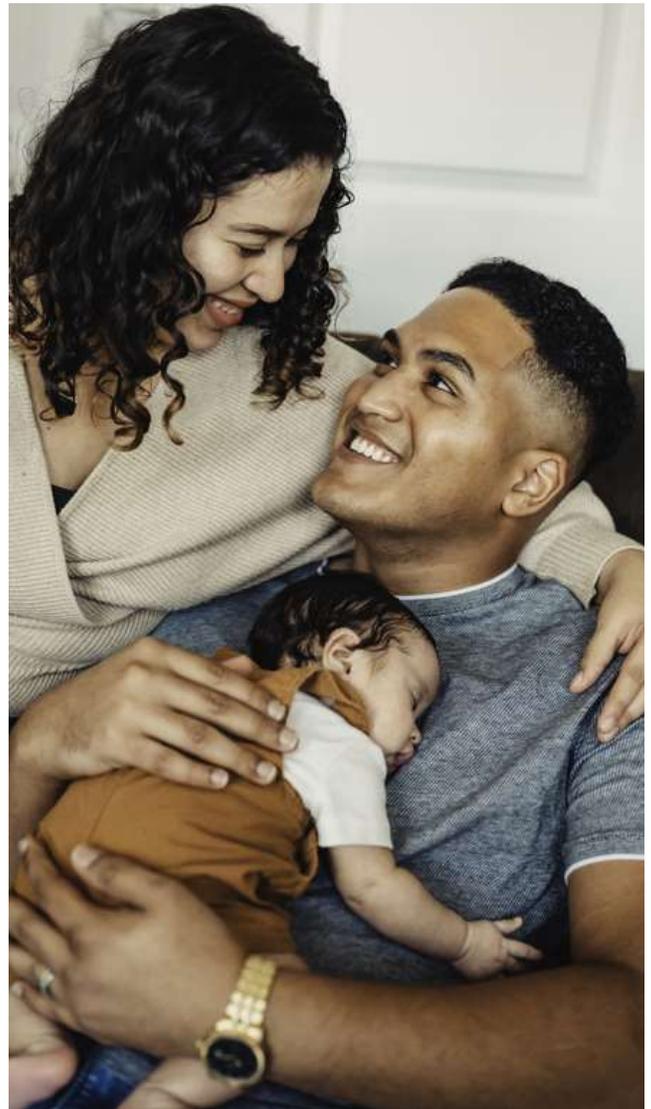
ACADEMY BY THE NUMBERS



Pathways.org

Shirley Ryan AbilityLab is helping healthcare professionals ensure that patients, and their parents, are connected to the right resources through its subsidiary Pathways.org. Pathways.org is a national, nonprofit organization uniquely dedicated to increasing knowledge about infant and early childhood development. To achieve this goal, Pathways.org provides and promotes free tools and resources across a variety of formats and outlets.

Pathways.org outreach efforts include an interactive website and Baby Milestones mobile application providing free materials to foster infant and child speech, play, and physical development and to aid parents in identifying early motor, sensory, communication, and feeding delays. The early detection of delays or atypical development can lead to early intervention, which can in turn lead to better outcomes for children. Among other resources, the Pathways.org website and application include age-based developmental milestones and abilities trackers; a “tummy-time” timer; games and activities to support development; educational articles; tips and videos; and other informational content for download, including brochures and checklists. These resources are easy to understand and have actionable steps to help parents understand their baby’s development and learn about the warning signs of atypical development. The Pathways.org Baby Milestones app has more than 250,000 registered users worldwide. Pathways.org also communicates information via social media, including on Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), Pinterest and YouTube.



Additionally, Pathways.org offers courses and conducts other outreach activities to help healthcare professionals enhance their knowledge of early detection practices, including via online medical education modules; presentations to medical societies and consortiums; exhibitions, poster presentations and workshops at conferences; and postgraduate trainings. All of these initiatives are guided by Pathways.org’s medical roundtable and vetted by pediatric physical therapists, occupational therapists and speech-language therapists — outstanding leaders in their field. All milestones are supported by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Pathways.org partners with healthcare facilities, educational institutions, nonprofits, healthcare organizations, social media influencers and others to provide resources on child development to a diverse population. Pathways.org materials are used 30,000 times each day and more than 300 educational institutions link to the Pathways.org website.

Donnelley Ethics Program

At Shirley Ryan AbilityLab, patients, families and their medical teams often face complex, dynamic and life-altering decisions. The Donnelley Ethics Program team works to understand these challenges, address the risks and benefits of available treatment options, and advocate for the values and preferences of patients and families. The program was established in 1995 as a resource for patients, families, clinicians, researchers and staff members. It addresses both clinical and research ethics issues, such as decisional capacity, informed consent and refusal, patient autonomy and self-determination, quality of life, disability rights and the integration of clinical care and research.

In FY24, ethicists responded to 213 consults and inquiries. The program also engaged 2,260 hospital staff through tailored ethics education.

The program serves as an educational resource for Shirley Ryan AbilityLab, the Northwestern medical community and the nation at large through seminars, presentations and scholarships. In FY24, it hosted robust education for trainees, including five lectures for new graduate nurses, 12 lectures for medical students, eight resident physician seminars and an intensive simulation-based do-not-resuscitate (DNR) communications training for resident physicians. The program reached more than 130 staff members and trainees through research ethics education and almost 100 staff members through clinical ethics in-services. Its Ethics in Practice hybrid case-based program reached more than 175 staff members. It also continued to host Schwartz Center Rounds, which allowed staff the time to explore and share the psychosocial and emotional aspects of caring for patients. In FY24, it hosted five Schwartz Rounds that reached more than 900 staff.

5. Support Programs

The FY22 Assessment identified a continued need for particular support programs for patients and their families as well as accessible fitness programs.

The following programs at Shirley Ryan AbilityLab provide unique resources for patients and their families:

Aphasia Programs

Aphasia is a condition that can occur suddenly after a stroke or brain injury and impacts a person's ability to speak, to understand language, and to read and write. Communication opportunities for people living with aphasia are crucial, enabling them to maintain social connections, participate in their community, express their needs and thoughts, and maintain a sense of dignity and quality of life.

Shirley Ryan AbilityLab's Center for Aphasia Research and Treatment offers programs that give participants the opportunity to practice communication, meet others living with aphasia, learn and have fun in a supportive venue. In-person and virtual programming includes conversation groups, a book club, a film discussion group, an aphasia choir and supported volunteer opportunities. Programs run on a quarterly basis and are facilitated by a speech-language pathologist and a trained volunteer.

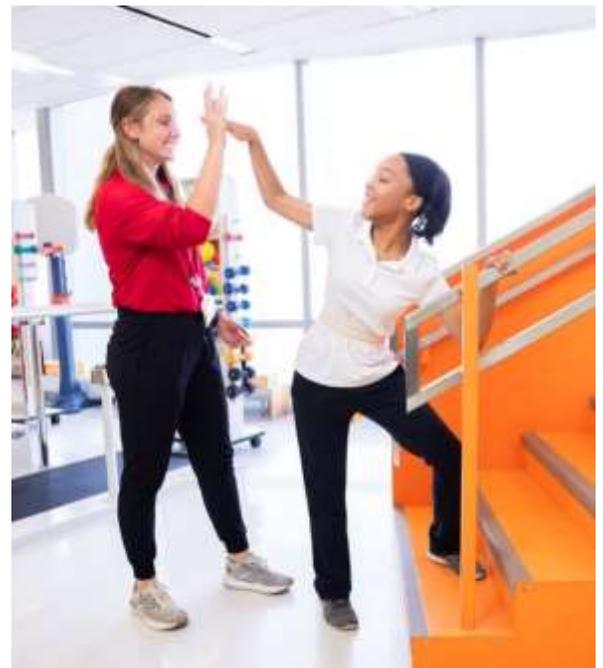


In FY24, the aphasia community groups provided enriching activities for 108 participants from 16 states over 592 sessions. In addition, participants performed 351 hours of service to local nonprofit organizations. Participants are charged a nominal fee of \$5-\$10 per session, with alternate arrangements available if a participant cannot afford the fee.

Additionally, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab aphasia experts are investigating novel ways to treat aphasia through technological innovation, clinical research studies and unique therapeutic treatments. In FY24, approximately 25 participants attended the month-long, self-pay Intensive Comprehensive Aphasia Program and more than 50 people participated in Shirley Ryan AbilityLab aphasia research studies.

Program Supporting Adolescent Patients in Progression to Adulthood

The shift from adolescence to adulthood presents unique challenges for rehabilitation patients. Like most peers their age, adolescents with disabilities are going through changes associated with puberty, sexual identity, increased abstract thinking, self-determination and increased responsibility. At the same time, they have the added responsibility of navigating the world with a disability and require additional support and services. In an effort to help adolescent patients through the progression to adulthood, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab operates a program for those ages 13 to 21 who have the potential for independent living and the ability to direct their own care. The program focuses on providing social support and training in cooking, money management, community transportation, medical information and care, and education and employment.



Vocational Rehabilitation Program

Shirley Ryan AbilityLab's vocational rehabilitation program promotes equal access to employment for patients and community members who have lost ability due to serious injuries or chronic conditions.

In FY24, counselors connected 96 individuals with jobs suited to their ability levels and assisted seven individuals with returning to school. Program staff also responded to 1,132 referrals for additional support services, which included:

- One-on-one counseling
- Return-to-work evaluations and job analyses
- Assistance with navigating disability policies and workplace accommodations
- Work trial assessments or internships

Shirley Ryan AbilityLab offers the only hospital-based vocational rehabilitation program in Illinois providing this level of assistance. Shirley Ryan AbilityLab covers the cost of initial assessments, which are not covered by most third-party payers. Patients can receive vocational services at eight Shirley Ryan AbilityLab facilities, ensuring that employment assistance is closely tied to community reintegration. During the past five years, the program has served an average of 900 clients annually.

Shirley Ryan AbilityLab also offers no-cost, accessible GED classes at a downtown Chicago location (541 N. Fairbanks). These classes have the potential for long-lasting and life-changing impact. This program is offered to any individual with an SCI who is looking to earn a GED. Unlike other GED programs, the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab facility is accessible and the computer lab is equipped with assistive technology. Shirley Ryan AbilityLab’s vocational rehabilitation staff members are experienced in meeting the unique needs of individuals with SCI as they pursue a GED. These considerations help reduce the barriers to continuing education for this population, increasing their potential for further education, employment and quality of life.

Adaptive Sports and Functional Fitness Program

Shirley Ryan AbilityLab continues to offer Chicago’s most comprehensive adaptive sports program, with year-round competitive and recreational sports opportunities for youth and adults living with a physical impairment.

In FY24, the adaptive sports program served 459 adult participants across 12 sports programs and four sports clinics. Of those athletes, 84 participated in team sports, including wheelchair softball, basketball, rugby and sled hockey.

The program also introduced 686 patients to a variety of adaptive sports at Shirley Ryan AbilityLab’s offsite locations across Chicago and the surrounding suburbs. Through these sports experience days, participants were able to use adaptive sports equipment — as well as enjoy the opportunities that sports provide.

The Goldman Functional Fitness Program

focuses on improving an individual’s ability and ease in performing activities of daily living, lessening dependence on caregivers and increasing the likelihood of long-term physical independence. Different from personal training, the Goldman Functional Fitness Program entails one-on-one sessions — led by a degreed exercise physiologist — focused on improving neuromotor fitness, functional ability level and quality of life. In FY24, the program offered 8,125 one-on-one sessions. Participants ranged from 15 to 96 years old.

The adaptive sports and fitness program is funded primarily by grants and generous community donations and is operated by 10.5 full-time-equivalent staff.



Military Sports Camp

Shirley Ryan AbilityLab's Military Sports Camp is designed for injured military personnel with a primary physical disability. Introductory level athletes are invited to learn from elite-level coaches while enjoying all that Chicago has to offer.

In FY24, 34 active duty service members and veterans participated in the organization's two military sport camps, with all costs — flights, lodging, meals, transportation, instruction and program fees — completely covered.

They enjoyed various sports, including sled hockey, wheelchair softball and cycling. At the end of the program, each participant received an at-home workout program, a list of adaptive sports programs near them, as well as information on grants for adaptive sports equipment so that they can continue their adaptive sports journey.

In 2025, the camp will offer sled hockey and off-road biking.



The Robert R. McCormick Foundation Center for Hope and Equity at Shirley Ryan AbilityLab

The Robert R. McCormick Foundation Center for Hope and Equity at Shirley Ryan AbilityLab was established in 2023 to address the systemic barriers that disproportionately impact patients from Chicago’s south and west sides.



While the organization delivers world-class rehabilitation care, social determinants of health — such as access to healthcare, transportation and economic stability — often hinder long-term recovery once patients leave the hospital. The Center for Hope and Equity was created to bridge these gaps through two key pillars: “Resources for Patients and Caregivers” and “Pathways to Healthcare Careers.”

Through the first pillar, “Resources for Patients and Caregivers,” the center provides comprehensive support services that help patients and caregivers navigate ongoing medical needs, secure accessible transportation, and connect with essential resources, such as food, utilities and housing assistance. The center has also implemented a

robust social determinants of health screening process to identify patients who require additional support before discharge. Through partnership with its specialized resources care manager, the center is working to ensure that patients with functional impairments receive equitable access to the care and resources they need to thrive.

The second pillar, “Pathways to Healthcare Careers,” focuses on increasing recruitment of candidates from the communities the hospital serves and exposing students from underrepresented backgrounds to careers in STEM and healthcare. Through these efforts, the Center for Hope and Equity is driving systemic change, promoting health equity and empowering individuals to achieve better long-term outcomes.

Prioritized Needs Assessment

Shirley Ryan AbilityLab reviewed and analyzed data obtained through methods described in the “data and methods” section of this report and has identified the following significant community health needs in its 2025 Assessment.

REHABILITATION HEALTH

Given the increasing prevalence of conditions resulting in disability, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab’s Assessment has identified the continued need to expand access for patients in various rehabilitation settings in the areas of stroke, SCI, brain injury, neuromusculoskeletal conditions, amputation, pediatric care and cancer. An implementation strategy describing the steps Shirley Ryan AbilityLab will take to address these needs will be created and published on the hospital’s website.

The Assessment also has identified the need for improved, readily available and easy-to-find information about access to existing resources at Shirley Ryan AbilityLab and a continued need for increasing awareness among patients, visitors and the community regarding Shirley Ryan AbilityLab opportunities.

Community Health Needs Assessment Focus Group 2025

As addressed above, the following individuals and organizations were represented at the focus group:

- Salute, Inc.
- Shirley Ryan AbilityLab Adaptive Sports Participant with Bilateral Lower-extremity Amputation
- Shirley Ryan AbilityLab LIFE Center Peer Mentor and Stroke Survivor
- Shirley Ryan AbilityLab Parkinson’s Disease and Movement Disorders Program and Fitness Center Participant
- State of Illinois Department of Transportation Disabilities Division Representative and United Spinal Association of Illinois Board Member



The following themes emerged during the focus group, as did expressions of gratitude for how Shirley Ryan AbilityLab has changed participants' lives in a positive way.

Adjustment to Disability

The psychological adjustment to disability was cited as being as important as the physical recovery. Both dimensions are supported by Shirley Ryan AbilityLab's quality-of-life programs (e.g., sports and fitness, LIFE Center, spiritual care and therapeutic recreation) and community programs that assist with physical adjustment and provide an inherent sense of community and peer support.

Meaningful Engagement

Appreciation was expressed for how Shirley Ryan AbilityLab programs — and especially the quality-of-life programs — welcome and incorporate family members and able-bodied participants.

Support programs were applauded for both promoting physical activity as well as for the development of community and peer support.

Sports and Fitness

The ability to work out in a fitness center designed for individuals with physical disabilities was deemed essential. The Shirley Ryan AbilityLab fitness center and its equipment are accessible and managed by specially trained staff. The center fosters a sense of community with other individuals with physical disabilities.

Opportunities

The focus group identified areas of continued opportunity, including increased awareness of Shirley Ryan AbilityLab programs by referring physicians; more quality-of-life programs at Shirley Ryan AbilityLab off-site locations; further inclusion of youth with physical disabilities into sports and fitness programs; and early identification of disability in infants and young children.

Conclusion

Shirley Ryan AbilityLab remains deeply committed to serving the needs of the community and providing the best patient outcomes through the highest-quality clinical care, translational research, scientific discovery and education.



Appendix A

ORGANIZATION	DESCRIPTION
Salute, Inc.	Salute, Inc. is an independent organization which was founded to meet the physical and emotional needs of military men and women with disabilities. Salute, Inc. works individually with each veteran applicant to assess their situation and determine how to provide assistance. The most common requests are for help with housing, car, grocery and utility bills. Salute, Inc. works one on one with every veteran applicant to meet their specific need, tailoring the response so it will have the greatest impact on their life.
Shirley Ryan AbilityLab Adaptive Sports Participant with Bilateral Lower-extremity Amputation	This veteran athlete with bilateral lower-extremity amputation, who is a sled hockey player in the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab sports and fitness program, was invited to provide perspective.
Shirley Ryan AbilityLab LIFE Center Peer Mentor and Stroke Survivor	The LIFE Center peer mentor program introduces Shirley Ryan AbilityLab patients and families to the possibilities of post-rehabilitation success and supports engagement in life-long learning. Mentors share strategies that support goal achievement and community integration. This year's participant and mentor is a stroke survivor who has participated in many Shirley Ryan AbilityLab patient care experiences and quality-of-life programs, including sports and fitness.
Shirley Ryan AbilityLab Parkinson's Disease and Movement Disorders Program and Fitness Center Participant	This focus group participant was engaged to offer first-hand experiences as well as to offer suggestions for improved care.
State of Illinois Department of Transportation Disabilities Division Representative and United Spinal Association of Illinois Board Member	<p>United Spinal Association of Illinois is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization providing information and support for people paralyzed by trauma and medical conditions, family members and health care and related professionals that serve the SCI community.</p> <p>This year the representative is a board member of the United Spinal Association of Illinois and is employed by the State of Illinois Department of Transportation Disabilities Division and focuses specifically on individuals with physical disabilities. Additionally, this individual is a participant in Shirley Ryan AbilityLab quality-of-life programs.</p>

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