

Alexandra Murphy, 14 East

Reporter of the Year

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Alexandra Murphy

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ABOUT

I am a Chicago-based journalist with an avid interest in investigative reporting with a focus on investigating patterns of misuse of public resources within governmental agencies in Illinois. By focusing on rigorous, in-depth investigations, I hope to make powerful change on both a local and national level.

SKILLS

- Investigative Reporting
- FOIA/ public records
- Copy Editing
- Fact Checking
- Interviewing
- Newsletter Production

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Investigative Associate for Block Club Chicago – September 2023 – present

- Worked on a long-form investigative piece on the long-vacant Lathrop Homes, one of Chicago's first public housing sites.
- Attended weekly meetings with the Watch Team to discuss story progress and provide feedback to other journalists.
- Assisted in additional breaking news coverage, including covering a CHA board meeting.

Assistant Producer for WTTW Chicago Tonight with Carol Marin and Don Moseley – January-June 2023

- Worked with a team to produce two investigative pieces for web and digital formats.
- Assisted in fact-checking the broadcast and digital piece before publishing.
- Helped with light production and camera setup for interviews.
- Assisted in getting b-roll clips for the video element of the story.

Special Projects Editor for 14 East Magazine – June 2023-present

- Lead a team of reporters and editors in one investigative reporting project each quarter.
- Manage, edit and publish the newsletter "In the Loop."

Contributor for 14 East Magazine and The DePaulia – March 2022-present

- Formally pitch story ideas to both 14 East and The DePaulia.
- Produce stories with interviews, multimedia and audio elements.
- Edit stories on time after comments and changes are made by editors.

EDUCATION

DePaul University – Chicago

Master of Arts in Journalism June 2024

Bachelor of Arts in Journalism June 2023

WORK HISTORY

Kohler Co – Chicago, August 2022-present

Retail Associate

- Accurately calculate an inventory of a variety of items.
- Communicate with distributors to effectively place orders when specific items are out of stock.
- Record all purchases being made with customers by keeping track of all receipts.

BBK Performance – Temecula, California, May-September 2020

Accounting Assistant

- Assistant company accountant with data analytics.
- Helped manage the CRM software system.
- Reviewed various digital ad campaigns such as Google Ads, Facebook and Instagram.
- Reconciled financial books including incoming and outgoing funds.

PUBLISHED WORKS

[Block Club Chicago, "CHA Approves Plan to Jump Start Stalled Redevelopment At Long-Empty Lathrop Apartments"](#)

[14 East Magazine, "Who is Guardian Security? DePaul's Contract Security with a Controversial History"](#)

[14 East Magazine, "How DePaul's Mental-Health Services Are Not Meeting Students' Needs"](#)

[Block Club Chicago, "DePaul University Requiring Everyone to Carry ID on Campus After Robberies Targeting Students"](#)

<http://fourteeneastmag.com/index.php/2024/05/18/cpd-depaul-public-safety-tear-down-encampment-on-the-quad/>

CPD, DePaul Public Safety Tear Down Encampment on the Quad

BY ALEXANDRA MURPHY

18 MAY

NEWS & POLITICS

DePaul University called in CPD and Campus Public Safety at 5:30 a.m. to dismantle the ongoing encampment on the Lincoln Park Campus. Two students were arrested for obstructing traffic, said CPD Chief of Patrol Jon Hein.

Hailey Bosek contributed to this story.

The Chicago Police Department stands in front of the DePaul University Quad after clearing the encampment on Thursday, May 16. Photo by Alexandra Murphy.

On Thursday morning, DePaul University called in the Chicago Police Department and DePaul Public Safety to dismantle the ongoing pro-Palestinian encampment on the Quad at 5:30 a.m. after its 17th day on campus.

Protestors say officers arrived wearing protective gear, knocking on tents with batons and pushing everyone back from the encampment to exit on the side of Belden Avenue.

Organizers also explained that from the time they were informed about the raid until they had to leave, they had less than five minutes to gather their belongings.

DePaul University President Robert L. Manuel sent an email around the same time at 5:34 a.m. to faculty, staff and students announcing the encampment takedown, stating: "Since the encampment began, DePaul has taken great care to provide the greatest leeway possible for free expression. However, the expression of some has now led to the disruption of university operations, interference with student learning, and safety threats to individuals and the public."

The email also said one of the main reasons CPD was called in was because "the situation has escalated with physical altercations, credible threats of violence from people not associated with our community, an inability for the other members of our community to take part in the core academic experiences on our campus, and an ever-

growing series of threats to the people involved in the encampment and our community members.”

Henna Ayesh, the media spokesperson for Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) at DePaul University, said organizers of the DePaul Divestment Coalition were not given prior warning by the university administration before CPD and Public Safety went in and cleared the encampment and removed students’ belongings.

“They were pushing people out of their tents, and they got all the students to come out forcibly onto the street,” Ayesh said. “When they got all the tenants to come out onto the streets, if they were without belongings, they didn’t give them the chance to go back and even grab it.”

Shortly after CPD removed protestors from the Quad, DePaul crews could be seen cleaning up the encampment and large garbage trucks were brought in to dispose of tents and belongings. Other crew members later in the day were seen ripping off signage from the front gates.

A view of the Quad after DePaul crews had been clearing the encampment. Photo by Adit Jaganathan.

The clearing of the encampment follows the Office of the President sending out an email last Saturday, announcing the university had reached an “impasse” in negotiations with the DePaul Divestment Coalition, saying responses to the encampment have “inadvertently created public safety issues that put our community at risk.”

After CPD and Public Safety had completed emptying the Quad, the Office of the President sent out another email which included a detailed explanation of why the university decided to bring in CPD and Public Safety to clear out the encampment on DePaul's campus. The email [included a link](#) to an accumulation of photos and videos of items that were deemed a threat found in the encampment, along with some complaints from neighbors about the ongoing encampment.

Photos published on the website show vandalism to DePaul's property such as spray-painted graffiti, chalk and antisemitic stickers. They posted videos of noise ordinances in the Quad and of student protestors shouting, "Go home, racist!" [to the counter protestors on May 5](#). Other videos and pictures show art that condemns zionism, [mentions the intifada](#) or calls for the end of Israel. The university website links to videos originally posted by pro-Israel pages that documented interactions between the conflicting sides.

On the website, the university also said there were over 625 registered complaints from neighbors and community members and 425 registered complaints from students, faculty and staff and parents.

Amber Price, a resident who lives behind the Mobil gas station where students were protesting, said she was taken aback when she saw the encampment being cleared out by police.

"I am shocked because, like I said, I've been in this building the entire time this has been going on," said Price. "Before today, it was very peaceful."

DePaul University's encampment was first set up on April 30, when eight DePaul student organizations set up an encampment demanding that DePaul University be transparent with students about their investments, as well as divest from and cut ties with Israel. The organizations included the Student Government Association, Movimiento Estudiantil de Solidaridad y Apoyo, Black Student Union, Native American and Indigenous Student Association, Students for Justice in Palestine at DePaul University, Jews for Justice, Students Against Incarceration, and Southwest Asian and North African Student Association.

DePaul's encampment was the last standing in the city of Chicago and the second-longest lasting across the country, surpassing the one at the University of Chicago, which had been disbanded by police after a week.

Hamas, which controls Gaza, attacked Israel on Oct. 7, [killing an estimated 1,200 Israelis and taking around 240 people hostage](#). The Israeli military has since conducted more than six months of military action in Gaza, including large-scale airstrikes and raids. More than 34,500 people have been killed in Gaza, [including more than 13,000 children](#), according to Palestinian health officials. The United Nations says "[hundreds of thousands](#)" more could die if Israel goes forward with a planned invasion of the city of Rafah.

[Rafah has acted as the last evacuation place for citizens. An area of eastern Rafah that holds more than 100,000 Palestinians](#) has now been ordered to evacuate to Muwasi, a

declared safe zone by Israel. The United Nations says that this area, which is more of a makeshift tented camp, [is not ready to hold that many refugees.](#)

At DePaul, in a press conference, Chief of Patrol Officer Jon Hein said CPD came in at the university's request, saying they had been asked to "assist in the removal of the encampment." Hein also confirmed two people were arrested for obstruction of traffic, one male and one female student.

Chief of Patrol Officer Jon Hein speaks at a press conference at the end of the Quad on Belden Avenue on Thursday, May 16. Photo by Alexandra Murphy.

"One of the students was wearing the hijab and the police took it off," Ayesh alleged in response to the encampment arrests. "And she's now arrested. Both of them are arrested. They weren't doing anything." There is video evidence of this incident, however 14 East doesn't have access to the video. Both students have since been released, according to an [Instagram post](#) by the DePaul Divestment Coalition.

After the campus raid, students traveled in a large group across the street to the Mobil gas station on Fullerton, where they continued to hold signs and chant until around 1 p.m. There was heavy police presence throughout the day, with CPD lined up on bikes in front of the group of protestors and some who stood next to the DePaul Quad into the late afternoon.

Some students sat along the curb, trying to figure out how to get lost laptops and items back. Some students held signs that read "We will be in these streets until the genocide ends." When 14 East reporters asked what was next for the coalition, media

liaison Simran Bains explained their priorities were centered around re-centering and keeping the community of student encampments safe.

“Our first priority right now is making sure that our community is safe, and they’re emotionally, mentally and physically taken care of,” Bains said. “As well as getting the people who were wrongfully arrested for exercising their First Amendment right to protest out of jail, and making sure that they’re physically, emotionally and mentally okay too.”

Ald. Byron Sigcho-Lopez (25th ward), who joined with protestors, said he believes the students at DePaul should be granted the right to protest on their campus and ask for the university to divest from Israel.

“I think the university has a responsibility to de-escalate to meet the students and faculty as well that are protesting the injustice of genocide, and I think that it is immoral to silence,” said Ald. Sigcho-Lopez. Ald. Sigcho-Lopez has been a vocal supporter of the encampment since the start, making multiple appearances to speak with students and press.

In response to the encampment in Lincoln Park, Ald. Timmy Knudsen (43rd ward) also released a response to DePaul University clearing the encampment, stating the following:

“We are in touch with university leadership and City officials and will keep residents updated as we learn more about the next steps for the area.”

Protestors gather in front of the DePaul Lincoln Park Student Center in the evening, following the encampment raid. Photo by Alexandra Murphy.

Later in the day following the raid, around 6:30 p.m., the DePaul Divestment Coalition held a press conference in front of the Lincoln Park Student Center, with around 300 people in attendance. Students continued chanting, "There is only one solution, the student-led revolution." Among some of the speakers were SPJ spokesperson Ayesh, DePaul Student Government Association President Parveen Mundi, Ald. Sigcho-Lopez, spokesperson Ethan for Jews for Justice, a DePaul liberal arts professor who declined to be named and Rabbi Brant Rosen of Tzedek Chicago.

After the press conference, more joined the crowd in front of the Student Center for a rally, holding signs and chanting while heading north on Sheffield. Hundreds of students walked the street to rally against the clearing of the Quad. The rally ended around 10 p.m with protestors completing their journey on Belden Avenue before students dispersed and police presence subsided.

In a speech regarding the encampment teardown, Ayesh said the DePaul Divestment Coalition has no plans to cease demands for DePaul to divest.

"The sentiment of divestment has not left with it," said Ayesh. "And this will not end until DePaul divests. So, join us in holding DePaul accountable."

Header photo by Alexandra Murphy

<http://fourteeneastmag.com/index.php/2024/05/03/how-depauls-mental-health-services-are-not-meeting-students-needs/>

How DePaul's Mental-Health Services Are Not Meeting Students' Needs

BY ALEXANDRA MURPHY

3 MAY

NEWS & POLITICS



From a lack of transparency regarding counselor licensing to inadequate support for DePaul's large campus population, UCAPS hasn't sufficiently met students' needs from the start.

Editor's note: Ella McCoy is a Staff Writer at 14 East Magazine.

Junior Lilly Patrick had been eager for mental-health support since the beginning of the 2023 Autumn Quarter, when she decided to try the new therapy service DePaul had to offer.

After her first few sessions with her counselor, she finally felt like she was getting comfortable enough to open up to someone new about her mental health. That was until her counselor said they would refer her outside of the service at the end of the quarter. Patrick and her counselor only met a total of four times before she was told she would benefit more from receiving more specialized help.

After about two months of waiting, nearing the end of week nine of Winter Quarter, Patrick still had not received a referral for her to see other counselors in the area or any message checking in on her well-being.

“Last quarter she told me that she would refer me to other places to receive further help with my mental health before the winter break,” Patrick said. “But it’s almost the end of the quarter now and I still haven’t heard back.”

DePaul University rebranded its counseling services to University Counseling and Psychological Services (UCAPS) in July 2022, after the university ended its contract with the support line My Student Support (SSP).

UCAPS currently has 11 full-time clinicians and one part-time psychiatrist for DePaul’s more than 20,000 students. The counseling services offered focus on “free, goal-focused, collaborative, short-term, confidential, individual and group counseling services for DePaul students,” according to the [UCAPS website](#). The service also offers a 24/7 care line students can use to call and connect with a counselor.

Even with the new counseling services, some students say their mental-health needs are not being met and the service has fallen short in providing adequate support.

After originally going through a long process of signing up through the UCAPS system to get assigned to a counselor, Patrick was told in her last session that she would have to go through the sign-up process again starting after the winter break if she chose to use the service again.

The process to go back through the UCAPS system is lengthy, with multiple pages requesting basic information and responses to questions. Students are asked to provide medical information, sign agreements and complete an availability screener. Returning students are required to go through the site and answer each question for a second time. Despite having used the service before, there is still a chance a returning student will be assigned to a new counselor who knows nothing about their history.

UCAPS uses the Titanium Schedule system, which has two different forms for students to fill out, one for new clients and another for returning clients. Both forms take students through the same amount of questions, even if it is not the first time a student is going through the system. After submitting the form, a student will have to wait 24 to 48 hours before receiving an email about who their assigned counselor is, and when and where the appointment will take place, either virtually or in person.

“This (scheduling) is a time-consuming process to then meet with someone who you didn’t have before and who doesn’t know anything about you,” Patrick said.

Dawson Hobbs, a senior DePaul student, first used UCAPS in the Autumn Quarter 2022 and stopped using it in June 2023.

For Hobbs, walking directly across the street to the Student Center was convenient. The reason he eventually stopped using the service was because from his very first session, the counselor pushed it as more of a short-term option for students.

“Like a stepping stone,” he said. “I think it was kind of more like, when you’re in a tough spot, you can come see us. That’s kind of how they told it to me.”

After eight sessions, Hobbs’ counselor told him that he was outgrowing the service and that there was only so much that could be done in the university sessions. Hobbs

feels the sessions served him as a way to speak about his issues out loud, but they didn't leave him feeling like he walked away with any insight gained.

He also expressed that while all of the therapists seemed to focus on the overall theme of mental health, none of them focused on some of the more specialized issues he faced. His UCAPS counselor also mentioned in one of the sessions that they didn't focus on the specific problems Hobbs needed help with and recommended he see someone who was more specialized outside of the university service.

"I don't see any reason why we wouldn't have more specialists," he said. "Say I was struggling with anxiety, I don't think they have one person there who really specializes in anxiety."

Currently, UCAPS has mental-health clinicians, a staff therapist and a psychiatrist who help students with a "goal focused, time-limited, and collaborative approach" to address overall mental health. There are two staff members currently dedicated to serving students with trauma-focused help.

When asked about the referral process and the range of specialization for the services, a statement sent by DePaul University Communications and attributed to Director of UCAPS Tow Yau stated: "Clinicians are trained to address a broad range of mental health concerns within a brief treatment model. However, UCAPS is not intended to be a long-term care option. When a student's treatment needs require specialized or longer-term care the student may be referred to a community-based provider."

In these kinds of situations, the university statement goes on to say, UCAPS is "often able to provide individualized referrals to meet their specific treatment needs."

Hobbs also saw one of the on-staff psychiatrists— who has since left UCAPS— which he said was not effective and only caused his mental health to worsen.

Hobbs explained that during his first session, he was put on medication that ended up making him feel worse. He couldn't make a follow-up appointment with the psychiatrist through UCAPS for nearly three weeks.

"It took me two sessions to actually change medications," Hobbs said. "After I went back and told her I didn't love how it made me feel, she was like, 'Well, keep trying it.' I came back the next time and was like, 'No, this actually makes me feel horrible.'"

In response, DePaul University Communications and Yau said they cannot provide information on specific student situations because of privacy concerns but "continually explore ways to address evolving needs."

The statement added that UCAPS sends a brief survey at the end of each quarter to students who use the service. "We strongly encourage students to share their experience with UCAPS via this survey," the statement read. "The results will inform our ongoing efforts to improve and enhance care."

The trajectory of DePaul's mental-health services

Before UCAPS, DePaul's previous mental-health service offered to students was called University Counseling Services (UCS). It offered short-term counseling and provided

“referrals to community mental health providers when students need or could benefit from longer term or more open-ended psychological or psychiatric services,” according to the [website](#).

Students were able to call UCS and make same-day or next-day appointments after their telephone consultation. A member would talk with each student for about 15 minutes to decide what kind of help was needed. After talking with the help line, students would then have an initial appointment to set up a plan for meeting.

[UCS](#) made it clear that they were operating within a “time-limited” and “brief therapy” environment. They only offered a 20-session maximum throughout the course of a student’s entire undergraduate or graduate degree program. They charged a \$5 service fee for each individual counseling session along with \$10 for visits regarding medication management.

UCS was in place at DePaul until Spring 2021. During the COVID-19 pandemic, UCS made the decision to partner with My Student Support Program (SSP), a third-party app that connected students with a 24/7 free mental-health support line. At the time, [Yau said](#) the shift in service was the result of UCS undergoing major changes after some employees chose to leave DePaul.

When a student would first log in to My SSP, they would have to fill out multiple assessments to determine whether they were struggling with anxiety or depression and answer other questions about drug and alcohol intake. Based on this self-evaluation, students would receive a recommendation from My SSP on the treatment they should receive.

During a time when students were already isolated due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was only one counselor employed at DePaul, who was not accepting new patients at the time. This meant My SSP, the only available option for mental-health support through DePaul, offered students no face-to-face communication.

When DePaul decided to shift to the third-party app, the responsibility of providing students mental-health support began to fall onto faculty members more than ever before.

In November 2021, shortly after UCS decided to partner with My SSP, a DePaul *Newsline* article was released titled, [“Tips for Faculty to Support Students Struggling with their Mental Health.”](#) The piece included suggestions and resources from UCS for how faculty members at DePaul could help support students who are struggling with their mental health.

Even though faculty members are not mental-health professionals and are unlicensed, Yau mentioned in the *Newsline* article that “they play an important role as the so-called gatekeepers for students, who often reach out to them first when they’re having problems.”

UCS recommended faculty members “recognize the signs” and “respond with empathy” in situations where a student might be showing excess stress and anxiety. Yau also said staff members can check in on students who show these signs, asking questions like “How’s your family? How’s life? How’s school?”

The second suggestion, other than the regular check-ins, was to refer students to the only operating mental-health service DePaul had at the time, My SSP.

The *Newsline* article also walked professors and staff through the process of how to assist students with downloading the My SSP app and gave UCS as a resource for faculty to consult on how to better support students.

“For students who need more intensive therapy or treatment – for example, for those struggling with substance abuse, eating disorders or more complex health issues – My SSP or UCS will work with students to refer them to the appropriate care,” the *Newsline* article said.

DePaul eventually rebranded the counseling service to University Counseling and Psychological Services (UCAPS) in June 2022 and began offering free services to students and with the addition of psychiatric help. Currently, DePaul UCAPS has 11 full-time clinicians and one part-time psychiatrist. The new, rebranded service is still being promoted on the website as helping students short term. Yau explained the sessions are scheduled based on what the counselor believes the needs of the student are.

“We keep more of a short-term service in our counseling center because we find that many college students are not able to work long term. They tend to have a kind of busy schedule, so the short term is very helpful,” Yau said. “Also, we could not see everyone in terms of long-term services because we have roughly 20,000 students.”

He also said students are welcome to go through UCAPS again if they wish to, though they would have to fill out the intake form again and could be assigned to a new counselor.

Although the short-term service is presented as better meeting students’ needs, some students said this limitation of the service has left them feeling unsupported.

University Counseling Licensing Procedures in Illinois

When Patrick had her first counseling session with UCAPS, the counselor told her they were “in the process” of being licensed. The counselor mentioned someone could be coming in at some point to supervise the in-person session, though according to Patrick’s account of events, no one else came to the session.

Freshman Ella McCoy shared a similar experience, saying her counselor mentioned they were “in the process” of being licensed. McCoy remembers the counselor saying they were waiting on the state to deliver their license in the mail.

The Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation is responsible for licensing counselors. After confirming with an IDFPD representative where to look in the database, out of the 11 members on the UCAPS staff page, two members could not be found in the directory.

Yau confirmed UCAPS has some members on staff who are unlicensed and that are “in the process of getting the licensure” and those staff members, he said, are labeled “under supervision” with a licensed staff member.

He explained that supervision sessions are held once a week and a licensed clinician on staff will meet with an unlicensed staff member for about an hour.

According to Yau, “10 full-time clinicians are licensed and one is working toward a license in clinical psychology.”

The university statement also said: “In addition, two clinical trainees from the mental health counseling program provide sessions under close clinical supervision from licensed supervisors. During an initial screening, this information is readily shared with students, and they can decide if they would prefer to see a staff member or a clinical trainee.”

Both Patrick and Hobbs said during their initial screening when signing up for UCAPS, they were not given the option to choose between a clinical trainee or a staff member and that the counselor was assigned to them.

“I was never given the option to pick my counselor. I don’t ever recall being given the choice to pick between a clinical trainee or staff person. In fact, this is the first time hearing about that,” Patrick said.

In the state of Illinois, it is required by law to have a license to practice as a university counselor unless in training, and if a counselor is without a license, there are specific requirements in place for supervision. State law also requires any unlicensed counselors or psychologists to explicitly state that they are an “intern” or “resident” who is in need of supervision.

Currently the UCAPS website uses terminology like “mental health clinician” and “staff therapist” to describe counselors on the staff list. There is no designation as of April 2024 to clarify if a counselor is in training or in the process of being licensed.

When asked if there is a place on the UCAPS website to designate if a counselor is “in the process” of being licensed, Yau said, “No, however, a clinician’s licensure status and supervisor information is reviewed at the time of initial intake.”

The two clinical trainees are also not listed on the website, according to Yau.

There is also nothing on the UCAPS staff page that specifies who is taking on a supervisor role or overseeing training. [Northwestern University’s website](#) highlights a “Director of Supervision” and “Clinical Training Directors” who help oversee the staff member supervision process. [UIC](#) similarly has an Associate Director for Training who helps supervise staff, postdoctoral fellows, and doctoral interns and externs.

[The Illinois law governing professional counselors states:](#) “the student, intern, or resident is designated by a title ‘intern’ or ‘resident’ or other designation of trainee status.” The law also states, “these activities constitute a part of the student’s supervised course of study and the activities and services are not conducted in an independent practice.”

DePaul Problem or a Higher-Education Problem?

DePaul is not the only university in the Chicago area whose mental-health services have been under scrutiny by students for offering a brief therapy model, but DePaul has a lower ratio of staff to students than some of the other private universities.

At Loyola University of Chicago, 16,899 students were enrolled as of 2022. There are 54 staff members at the school's Wellness Center, which serves as a clinic for students' physical health and also includes mental-health services. For the mental-health services alone, there are nine social workers, four psychologists, nine counselors and a therapy dog. Students are able to contact a Mental Health Professional (MPH) through a 30-minute phone consultation which can be scheduled online or over the phone.

Northwestern maintains a similar enrollment to DePaul, with 22,732 students, but Northwestern lists more than triple the number of staff on its counseling and psychological services webpage with 38 members. The staff split their service between the Evanston and Chicago offices.

DePaul UCAPS has a counseling office in the Loop campus located in the Law building's first floor. However, the service does not have its own website, and there is no designation for staff members based on location. There is only one option for a Loop campus support group titled "Understanding Ourselves & Others" that shows up on the intake form, with the rest of the group sessions located online or on the Lincoln Park Campus.

In response to questions about what services are offered in the Loop versus Lincoln Park, and if there is a different set of counselors for the second campus, DePaul shared the following from Yau: "Services on the Loop campus are similar to those on Lincoln Park. Some clinicians have office hours on both campuses."

[According to the International Accreditation of Counseling Services](#), efforts should be made to "maintain minimum staffing ratios in the range of one professional staff member (excluding trainees) to every 1,000 to 1,500 students." Yau said UCAPS currently has one professional staff member to every 2,000 students and that the university hopes to one day match the standard of other universities.

Like UCAPS, Loyola's Wellness Center and Northwestern's CAPS service are currently pitched as providing only short-term care for students. The Loyola Wellness Center website states, "the Wellness Center utilizes a brief treatment model for medical and mental health care." Northwestern's counseling center similarly only offers short-term individual counseling and group therapy for students.

Even with the short-term setup, however, Loyola and Northwestern have the recommended staffing ratio for counselors to consistently see students based on their needs and provide adequate referral. Even with the brief therapy model, Northwestern's CAPS service says on their website that they [don't have a session limit](#), with an emphasis on the number of sessions that any student receives based on meeting the student's needs.

When McCoy used UCAPS in Autumn 2023, she felt there was not enough attention to detail or a level of personalization in the sessions. After having seven total meetings with her counselor, she expressed there was not enough acknowledgement of the way she was feeling or many solutions presented.

After sharing that she had experience with religious trauma, her counselor's recommendation was to see a Catholic group on campus. This left McCoy feeling misunderstood and as if she was not being properly heard in the sessions.

"I'm sure she has a difficult job and sees a lot of students," McCoy said. "But I felt she was never taking the time to understand what I was trying to convey."

Other students like Patrick have been left feeling disheartened after DePaul counseling was not there for her when she needed resources to continue seeking professional help on her own.

"I haven't seen anyone since my last meeting with my counselor, which is a little sad because I do think it's important to maintain these sessions," she said. "But because I don't have that referral I just don't have a lot of information of where to turn to now."

Header by Sophia Johnson

<http://fourteeneastmag.com/index.php/2023/09/21/cta-remains-inaccessible-for-the-disabled-community/>

CTA Remains Inaccessible for the Disabled Community

BY ALEXANDRA MURPHY

21 SEPTEMBER

NEWS & POLITICS



Federally Funded All-Stations Accessibility Program is 20 Years Too Long

“All I remember is crossing the street, blinking, and when I open my eyes I see a nurse in front of me asking me where I was, what had happened.”

DePaul junior Julian Aparicio experienced a serious brain trauma injury in 2005 after sitting on the top of one of his friend’s cars as a joke, and, as a prank, his friends decided to drive off. Aparicio was in a coma for three weeks. Since the accident, he has been using a wheelchair.

Aparicio returned to school and work, but navigating the city on public transportation with a wheelchair has been more challenging than expected. The main source of his frustration comes from the unpredictability of the elevators.



Station Elevator Status at Harold Washington Library Station. *Photo by Alexandra Murphy.*

“One of the problems that I sometimes face are the elevators are out of order,” Aparicio said. “The sudden malfunctioning of elevators makes it hard.”

Aparicio also struggles with having to re-plan his routes depending on which stations are accessible with working elevators and which ones are not. Additionally, getting a service worker to recognize that Aparicio needs help getting on and off the train also proves to be difficult. To enter the car, Aparicio needs to wait until a CTA employee sets up a ramp on the platform.

Aparicio tends to avoid the Red Line because of CTA workers’ lack of patience, and of the fast-paced atmosphere of the train itself. He often rushes to get onto the platform. Aparicio prefers the Brown Line as his main method of transportation because the CTA staff is more gracious.

“In the past couple of weeks, I haven’t been feeling well, I’ve been really weak,” Aparicio said. “So, I’ve been taking the Brown Line instead of the Red Line because I know with the Brown Line there is more patience.”

All Stations Accessibility Program

Currently, Chicago has 103 of 145 CTA stations in Chicago that are accessible to people living with a disability, leaving 42 rail stations that are inaccessible. Over 520,000 Chicago residents or 10.1% report having a disability, according to the [city of Chicago website](#). Even with the number of stations accessible, many of the promoted accessible features on public transit have issues, including the inconsistency of the elevators, lack of elevated ramps, and overall support to get up to the platforms.

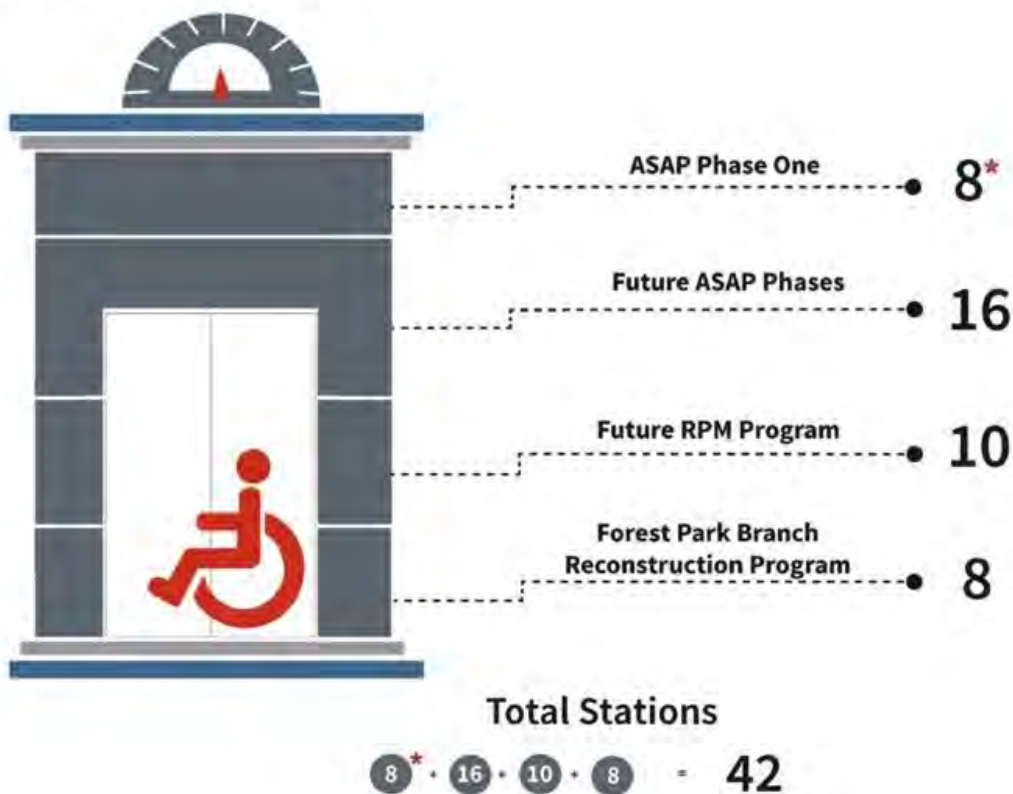
As a result, in 2018, CTA introduced the All-Stations Accessibility Program (ASAP) and later passed it into federal law in July of 2021. The 20-year-long program received \$118.5 million in federal funding. According to the City of Chicago website, the program makes all transit stations fully accessible for those who are disabled. However, the four-phase program has not made urgent changes despite the large amount of federal funding given to the city of Chicago.

The Quincy stop is one example of an accessible station that has recently been updated with new elevators and ramps. *Photo by Alexandra Murphy.*

The ASAP program is split into four stages. The Transit Chicago website only laid out in detail phase one. This phase will update eight stations and the following phases will update the remaining 34. The last two phases include the RPM (Red and Purple Modernization) Program and the Forest Park Branch Reconstruction Program, set to happen much later down the line in the 20-year-long ASAP program.

Austin (Green) stations, Montrose (Blue), and California (Blue) lines will be the first accessible stations in Phase 1.

Figure ES-1 Station Components of ASAP



* Includes four funded RPM Phase One stations and one CDOT-led station.

Photo credit: The Chicago Transit website.

The projected cost of Phase 1 phases in comparison to the future ASAP phases, with the expected cost being \$74.7 million. Future phases – that will not be made accessible for a while – have a projected cost of \$1.7 billion. For the 20-year program, including the RPM phase cost and Elevator Replacement Program costs, the unfunded amount totals \$2.1 billion.

Table ES-3 Twenty-Year ASAP and Elevator Replacement Program Cost

	Unfunded Cost (YOE)	Funded Cost (YOE)
ASAP Phase One Stations	\$74.7 Million	
State/Lake Station	-	\$119.4 Million ^a
RPM Phase One – Lawrence, Argyle, Berwyn, Bryn Mawr	-	\$2.2 Billion ^b
ASAP Phase One Five-Year Elevator Replacement Program	\$65.6 Million	-
Future ASAP Phases	\$1.7 Billion	-
Future Elevator Replacement Program	\$253.0 Million	-
TOTAL Twenty-Year Cost	\$2.1 Billion	

^a Reflects the projected cost for this CDOT-led project. To date, CDOT has secured CMAQ grant funds in the amount of \$56.9 Million, which will not cover the full projected cost. However, CDOT plans to seek additional federal funding for construction, so this has not been identified as part of the funding needed for ASAP Phase One.

^b Funding for RPM Phase One only has been programmed; the Future RPM Program remains unfunded. The RPM Program includes a larger infrastructure scope beyond accessibility.

Photo credit: The Chicago Transit website.

All Access Living, a Chicago-based advocacy group for the disabled community, agrees that the 20-year-long program is 20 years too long.

Laura Saltzman, the policy analyst on transportation at All Access Living, agreed that there should be a push for urgency when it comes down to quality of life for disabled riders. “We would of course prefer if the plan to meet the standard was faster,” Saltzman said. “The ADA was passed 30 years ago.”

When asked about some of the improvements that can be made for the stations to be more accessible, Saltzman expressed the need for making even the surrounding area of the sidewalks on each train station more accessible. Especially during winter, traveling in the snow can be a struggle for people with disabilities.

“The city needs to make sure people can get to the train by making sure there are accessible sidewalks everywhere. That means timely sidewalk repair, installing ramps where there are currently no ramps and plowing the sidewalks in the winter so they are not covered with snow or ice,” Saltzman said.

Aparicio also noted the lack of accessibility on the sidewalks for two reasons. One, the sidewalks getting off some of the train lines have a bumpy texture that makes it difficult for any wheelchair to roll smoothly on. Additionally, the snow and ice on the surrounding sidewalks during the winter makes it challenging to arrive at the stations while using a wheelchair. During this time, Aparicio said his only solution is to ask the train conductor for help.

“Sometimes I do my best to get the first train car because then the train conductor can see me,” Aparicio said. “Then, they are aware that I’m on the train.”

Inaccessibility on the CTA for people living with invisible disabilities

Other disabled riders face additional hidden challenges posed by Chicago's main transportation system.. Autism, an invisible disability, poses many sensory challenges when the elevators are often left unkept, and there are no strict regulations set in place for smoking in train cars.

David Hupp, a DePaul University student and member of the Student Government Association, grew up with autism and experienced many sensory issues, along with chronic fatigue and chronic pain. For Hupp, the CTA failed him with limited train cars available to escape the constant overload of stimulation with any strong fragrances or smoking. He expressed the frustration of getting on the train with the high likelihood of inhaling smoke.

A No-Smoking Sign posted on the Quincy station train platform. *Photo by Alexandra Murphy.*

“About five years ago, people started smoking regularly on the CTA. This did not used to be a thing. I’ve been riding the CTA for like 20 years, and prior to about five years ago I could have counted on one hand how many times I’d encountered someone smoking on the CTA,” he said.

This is one example of many issues that have come up for individuals who experience sensory issues.

According to a [Chicago Tribune article](#) about the Blue Line, the University of Illinois at Chicago’s School performed a 2017 study which found that this is the loudest stretch of the track in the system with “cars growing to a deafening roar” and the “screech of wheels grinding on the tracks.” This makes it near impossible for just about anyone to travel without discomfort, let alone someone who lives with a disability that poses a sensory issue.

Not Only a Chicago Problem

Chicago is one of many cities in the U.S. that has little accessibility for people with disabilities.

New York City has one of the worst accessible public transit systems out of any that exist in the world. The NYC Metra system has been criticized for inaccessibility, and only [126 of the 472 total stations](#), or 27%, are considered accessible to those with disabilities. As a result, the city recently proposed a change to the Fast Forward Plan, which includes the installation of more elevators in the stations. Fast Forward plans to reach the maximum possible accessibility in [10 years](#). Even with the 358 stations that are left inaccessible, NYC still has a faster plan in mind to make public transit more accessible for the disabled community.

On the other hand, in other large cities like Seattle and Boston, the public transit systems are already extremely accessible by ADA’s standards.

Other cities can look to Seattle’s successful transportation infrastructure, including a system that has street cars, buses and water taxis to get around. According to the [Seattle Department of Transportation](#), the Seattle streetcar is “accessible and easy to board for all users.” The department also explained there are wheelchair ramps that automatically deploy upon the press of a blue button on the inside or outside of each streetcar.

Boston is the runner-up to Seattle with 98% of their “T” stations accessible for people with disabilities. According to a [Washington Post](#) article, the Boston “T” may be accessible for riders, but there have been issues with elevator uptime.

Where Chicago Stands Today

Currently, the All-Stations Accessibility Program is still in Phase One of the 20-year-long project to make all rail stations fully accessible by 2038. Today, the majority of

the four phases included in the ASAP program remain unfunded, and the disabled community continues to be directly affected by the lack of accessibility on the CTA.

Header by Mei Harter

<http://fourteeneastmag.com/index.php/2024/03/01/turning-a-lifelong-passion-for-music-into-a-full-time-career/>

Turning a Lifelong Passion for Music into a Full-Time Career

BY ALEXANDRA MURPHY

1 MARCH

MUSIC & ENTERTAINMENT



Chicago indie musician Ben Pavlik details his experience balancing music as both a hobby and career

Photo by Meredith Smith.

From the time Ben Pavlik learned to take his first steps, he could hear loud sounds of the trumpet and guitar etudes filling up his home in the Chicago suburb of Elmhurst. Pavlik's childhood was immersed in the different musical notes and sounds from a young age. His dad plays the trumpet and is a high school music teacher, and his mom sings in choir.

"When my dad had guitars out, he made a point to keep the guitars out while we were growing up as kids so that we would crawl over them and touch them. I take for granted now that we're not hearing trumpet etudes in our living room," Pavlik said.

Pavlik was curious from the start and knew music was something he wanted to explore. The first band he started was with his brothers when they were in middle school. The brothers were often found blasting out Led Zeppelin covers. His little brother would be on the drums and the older brother would play bass, where they would all just jam out in their house.

During freshman year of high school, Pavlik started a band called Big Fans with Tatum Langley, another musician who now performs and sings at some of the best jazz venues across Chicago. Fast forward to senior year, Pavlik was a part of another jazz band where they would play at parties and other events.



Ben Pavlik playing with a fellow bandmate at Book Club Chicago. Photo by Yesenia Esetban.

"I played in this Jazz Manouche group, which is like ratatouille jazz, like fast jazz and that was really cool. We would play at the mayor of Elmhurst's parties, and the Drake Hotel in Oak Brook, he said.

At this point, Pavlik prefaced that he had not delved into indie music yet and was focused on playing jazz.

When Pavlik left high school, he attended Northeastern Illinois University but quickly realized music was something he wanted to pursue full time. From there, he decided to break into the Chicago indie scene after having some connections with other musicians and finding out about Book Club, an underground venue where indie musicians often play. Playing around with unique sounds and having more creative freedom was something that fascinated Pavlik.

One of the first indie bands he was a part of was called Inner Stella, which started up two years ago right after the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the band members, Aaron Paulsen, had seen Pavlik's guitar playing on Instagram and messaged him asking if he would be interested in joining the band. They specifically focused on more experimental indie music and would play gigs at Book Club, toying around with different sounds and ideas in their music.

The band eventually fizzled out because, from Pavlik's perspective, they were doing too much too fast and all were experiencing the typical musician burnout.

"I think maybe we took it too seriously," he said. "It was like all the stoves were all turned on at once and there was just this pressure."

One of his band members and good friends from Inner Stella, Andrew Vucsko-Cameron, spoke kindly about Pavlik's character and who he was as a band partner.

"He's just the sweetest guy ever. I mean, at first he can be perceived as quiet, but once you get to know him, he's just the nicest dude ever, so supportive of his friends and always looking to bring other people up with him," Cameron said.

When speaking about his musical capability, Cameron described how singular and creative Pavlik's music style is, along with him having some of the best technique he has seen from other musicians in Chicago.

Ben Pavlik performing at Book Club Chicago. Photo by Meredith Smith.

“He’s one of the most creative minds in music that I’ve ever met,” he said. “Not even mentioning from a technical standpoint he is one of the best guitar players I have ever played with.”

Being a full-time musician in Chicago comes with figuring out how to make ends meet when the bills start flooding in. Eventually, sharing one’s passion with the world can start to feel like a full-time job.

“Sometimes you have to play a lot of music you don’t like listening to for the money, just to be able to pay rent,” he said.

I asked Pavlik how he balances holding on to music as a hobby and passion while also earning a living. His response was simple: stepping away even for a few hours a day to think about or do something else is a beneficial and healthy way to continue doing what you are passionate about. Also, Pavlik shared that he has a list full of voice memos on his phone from just playing and messing around with music in his free time.

Now, at the age of 23, Pavlik and his girlfriend, Sarah Heldman, sit across from me at a local coffee shop on Clark Street. They are seeing a guitarist named Matteo Mancuso after our interview, and the two of them are buzzing with excitement to see one of their favorite shared artists. Heldman said she studied communication at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, where she just recently graduated, and also shares a similar passion for music.

It becomes clear even for the 30 minutes spent sitting across from the two musicians, that what they share is special. When asking about Pavlik’s inspirations for writing music, Heldman jokingly teases, “Me, obviously.”

The most recent music Pavlik is working on is an upcoming album with his girlfriend, a shared project the two said should be finished by June. Both were extremely excited to share the news and to be working on a passion project together.

On the side, Pavlik also started working at Book Club Chicago as a sound technician, and he plays jazz on Saturdays at a popular brunch spot on North Lincoln Avenue called Sojourn. He currently plays in two local Chicago bands. Big Fans, which he restarted with Tatum Langley, has more jazz influence. He also plays guitar and sings for another band called Gecko, falling more under the indie genre. The sound, Pavlik says, is kind of a mix of the Beach Boys and The Strokes.

“We’re really into crowd engagement and interaction,” Pavlik said. “We think of the audience as one person, making the room feel smaller and more intimate. Creating that feeling of intimacy even in a bigger space, that’s our goal.”

Pavlik will be playing a solo performance at Book Club Chicago on March 23rd. You can find more information about the performance by following Book Club Chicago on Instagram [here](#).

Header by Sofi Martinez