

As part of your final assignment for your role as an Education Advocacy Research Assistant with the Chicago Education Advocacy Cooperative, you will respond to five reflection questions that explore the outreach, advocacy, and research work you completed between January and June 2025. Your responses should demonstrate a thoughtful engagement with your experiences supporting migrant and refugee families, organizing community resources, and contributing to data-driven research projects. For each question, write one well-developed paragraph that includes specific examples, personal insights, and connections to broader themes such as educational equity, mutual aid, career readiness, and the ethical use of data. You are encouraged to reflect on both the challenges and moments of growth you experienced, how your understanding of advocacy and community work has evolved, and how this opportunity has shaped your personal goals, values, and future direction. Your reflection will be evaluated based on your ability to clearly describe your involvement in family support efforts, articulate your role in at least one of the ChiEAC research studies, and meaningfully connect this experience to your learning, skill development, and commitment to social impact. Please submit your completed responses as a single document to the D2L assignment folder titled "ChiEAC Research Assistant Reflection" by the posted deadline.

Education Advocacy Research Assistant

Chicago Education Advocacy Cooperative (ChiEAC) — Chicago, IL

January 2025 – June 2025

- Provided direct outreach and educational support to 18 low-income migrant and refugee families across Chicago, assisting with CPS enrollment, translation services, special education referrals, and access to culturally responsive academic resources.
- Collected and distributed over 500 pounds of donated clothing and winter gear to meet the immediate needs of newly arrived families and raised more than \$2,000 for ChiEAC's 2025 Community Impact Fund to support emergency assistance and microgrants.
- Collaborated with ChiEAC staff and peer volunteers to contribute to three independent community-based studies, used Qualtrics and mobile outreach strategies to collect, clean, and organize over 300 unique data points across the three projects (see below) while ensuring all responses met ChiEAC's internal ethical standards.
 - *Study 1:* Surveyed attitudes toward career readiness and barriers to job searching among low-income students and caregivers.
 - *Study 2:* Collected survey data exploring public perceptions of the value of a college degree, particularly within first-generation immigrant families.
 - *Study 3:* Supported digital survey distribution for a project on community attitudes toward artificial intelligence, data privacy, and automation in everyday life.
- Represented ChiEAC in my community building trust with families and advocating for access to trauma-informed, bilingual, and equity-focused educational supports.

Education Advocacy Research Assistant *Reflection Questions*

1. What did serving migrant and refugee families teach you about trust, advocacy, and the barriers that families face when trying to access basic educational resources in Chicago? Reflect on specific moments of challenge or growth and consider how this experience shaped your understanding of educational equity.

Working with migrant and refugee families taught me how hard it can be to access basic educational resources when there are language barriers, confusing rules, and a lack of support. I have many family members who came here as refugees, and I just see it shows me how hard it truly was and how the system is so messed up. I noticed how some families felt lost trying to enroll their kids in schools or understand special education services. I learned that building trust takes time and that listening to people's concerns can make a difference. It made me think about how important it is to make resources easier to access and how being patient and kind can help families feel more comfortable asking for help.

2. How did your role in collecting and distributing clothing, raising funds, and organizing community support shift the way you understand mutual aid and grassroots organizing? What emotions or insights came up for you as you took on responsibility for meeting urgent needs in real time?

I went through all of my and my sister's clothing to find things that could help families in need. Collecting and donating clothes made me realize that even small acts can make a big difference to someone. I felt proud when I saw people getting clothes that fit them and made them feel comfortable. It made me see that mutual aid isn't just about giving things away, it's about showing people that they are seen and cared for. It also taught me how important it is to ask people what they need instead of just assuming.

3. Of the three research studies you contributed to, which one resonated most with your personal story or the stories of people you know? How did participating in this research project impact the way you view the role of data in shaping public understanding and policy?

The study about career readiness and job searching stood out to me because it reminded me of people I know who struggle to find jobs. Many people don't have the right connections or the skills to get good jobs, and that makes life really hard. Collecting data for this study made me see how powerful data can be in telling real stories that might otherwise go unnoticed. It showed me that data isn't just numbers it's a way to shine a light on problems and push for change.

4. How did this experience challenge or confirm what you believed about the power of community organizations in addressing complex issues like job searching, educational access, and technology in daily life? What do you now see as the strengths and limitations of this kind of work?

Working with ChiEAC showed me that community organizations can do a lot to help, but they can't do everything. My class helped by donating clothes and raising money, which made a difference, but there were still many more people who needed help. It made me realize that while community groups can make a big impact, they also need more resources and support to keep going. It also showed me that connecting local work to bigger policy changes could make the impact last longer.

5. Looking back at your time with ChiEAC, how do you think this experience shaped your personal goals, sense of purpose, or vision for the future? What skills or perspectives do you hope to carry forward—and how do you hope to keep supporting others?

My time at ChiEAC made me want to keep helping people and using my skills to make a difference. I learned how to plan events, raise money, and talk to different people, skills I can use in the future. It also taught me how important it is to listen to people and understand what they need. Moving forward, I want to keep volunteering and finding ways

to help people, whether it's through fundraising, organizing events, or just being there to listen and lend a hand.

Category	Criteria	Points Possible
Reflection on Community Engagement How well you reflect on your outreach, advocacy, and family support work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Describes specific examples of working with migrant or refugee families (e.g., CPS enrollment, translation, special education support) o Explains the challenges families face and how the student responded or adapted o Demonstrates an understanding of cultural relevance, language access, and trauma-informed care 	/20
Reflection on Research and Data Collection How well you explain the data collection and contribution to the three ChiEAC studies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Clearly identifies and reflects on their role in at least one of the three research projects o Explains the importance of the topic and how data was gathered (e.g., survey, outreach, digital tools) o Describes how the research helped inform their view of issues like career readiness, college access, or AI in society 	/15
Personal Growth and Future Impact How well you connect your experience to your own learning, values, and goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Reflects on how the experience shaped their understanding of advocacy, education, or community work o Identifies specific skills gained (e.g., communication, trust-building, organizing, ethical data handling) o Describes how this experience will influence their future studies, career, or community involvement 	/15