Amia Allmart

**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.

o *Study 1*: Surveyed attitudes toward career readiness and barriers to job searching among low-income students and caregivers.

o *Study 2*: Collected survey data exploring public perceptions of the value of a college degree, particularly within first-generation immigrant families.

o *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.

It really helped me understand that there are many people in Chicago who are struggling just outside our comfortable homes. I feel like it can be common to think of other people struggling far from you, especially if you live a more privileged life. But this has certainly opened my eyes to realize that there are very easy ways to help support people in your community. Advocacy is so important in spreading the word about people in need, even something as simple as telling your friend can go a long way. We all have connections, we all have communities, and while it may seem daunting, bringing people together is the best way to support one another.

1. 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?

Specifically with collecting clothes to give away to people, I felt a mix between stressful and hopeful. I was stressed because I felt like I needed to give away more than I had. I tried to gather as much as I could as well as making sure the material was good enough quality for them. I didn’t want to give someone a shirt with holes or anything. But I also felt hopeful because it was a nice feeling to know that someone might really appreciate and even enjoy the clothes I’ve collected. Like I really liked this shirt, what if somebody else would really like it too? It was heartwarming. It also felt personally fulfilling to put use to things that I do not necessarily need.

1. 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?

It definitely made me realize that contributing data is more accessible than I originally thought. And I know I’ve already said this, but providing support can be easy and even small things make a difference. The research study I resonated with was study 1, about how much they value a college degree and how fulfilled they are. I felt like I could really contribute to it and give my honest opinion on it without feeling confused or anything. It also made me feel seen, like I wasn’t the only one going through struggles.

1. 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?

It challenged my sometimes pessimistic mindset of “there is nothing I can do”. Because it can seem impossible at times, and despair and hopelessness can really weigh you down. But seeing how so many people have come together to support so many people has given me a lot of hope. Not only that, but it is inspiring as well. That change can happen even if you have to work hard at it. And it confirmed to me that people, - although sometimes can disappoint you -, also can surprise you. And that many, many people care about one another. I think a limitation but also a strength is the use of numerical data. I think it is an extremely useful tool that is very necessary, but I think it can also limit our minds if that is all we look at. We need to also hear people's heartfelt emotions and stories through outreach. Combining both forms of research can really help to provide the best support for ourselves.

1. 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?

It has inspired me to make use of my time and even the things I own to try and benefit other people and communities. I feel supported in the idea that it is not just me alone who wants to see change and provide for others. My vision for the future has been reinforced. I want to see a future full of trust and community. I love that there are so many other like-minded people who want the same or a similar future. I hope to keep coming into situations and opportunities with the perspective that I can fully contribute to what I am participating in.