



## OSF HealthCare joins collaboration platform SWITCH to address health equity

### For immediate release

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(October 14, 2021/PEORIA, ILLINOIS) – [OSF HealthCare](#) joins SWITCH, a new independent organization launched by [City Tech Collaborative \(City Tech\)](#), a Chicago-based urban solutions accelerator, to address health equity in Chicago. The Peoria, Illinois-based health system, which operates 15 hospitals in Illinois and Michigan, joins Verizon and the [University of Illinois Chicago \(UIC\) Innovation Center](#) as partners in the platform that accelerates, innovates and scales tech-enabled solutions.

[SWITCH](#) stands for Sustainable Wellness through Innovation, Technology, & Collaborative Health. Its mission is to increase health equity and measurably improve community health delivery and wellness outcomes in Chicago's most underserved communities. Solutions will be developed by engaging residents and patients to ensure they have an active voice in solution creation; leveraging a robust racial equity and inclusion (REI) methodology to address inherent bias in existing solution development processes.

As part of the partnership, SWITCH and OSF HealthCare, with support from the UIC Innovation and Verizon, will look at the possibility of expanding and commercializing the OSF CommunityConnect (OCC) software platform to improve access to health care, education, and disease prevention in the underserved neighborhoods around OSF HealthCare Little Company of Mary Hospital in Evergreen Park, Illinois and surrounding clinics and medical offices.

OSF has been using the OCC platform for its [OnCall Connect](#) program to allow digital health care workers to provide care, support, and monitoring of patients recovering at home post-surgery or from COVID-19. It will also be used as part of [the Medicaid Innovation Collaborative](#) to create solutions that improve access and quality of care for Medicaid patients throughout the state.

“OSF HealthCare is excited to be a partner in SWITCH and take the lessons learned from developing and deploying the OCC platform, and see if it can be a scalable solution, used by every hospital across Illinois that is interested in health equity and the need to deliver quality care to vulnerable populations,” said Dr. John Vozenilek, vice president/chief medical officer, Innovation & Digital Health at OSF HealthCare.

[Angela E.L. Barnes](#), general counsel, director of Legal Affairs & Growth Initiatives at City Tech Collaborative founded SWITCH, and she will lead the partners' efforts to improve health access with stakeholders who will have direct input in helping determine the best strategy for delivering better health and wellness. Barnes has long been a champion of diversity and equity, and last year was appointed to the [Racial Justice Diversity Committee](#) for the federal courts in the Northern District of Illinois to examine the court's racial diversity and help identify barriers to providing racial justice to everyone.

"The pandemic has only exacerbated what we already know to be true: systematic disparities and biases create significant barriers to achieving health and wellness for all communities," said Barnes, "These growing health disparities are even more evident in Chicago's BIPOC communities on the South and West sides. With the development of SWITCH, I'm excited to deliver resident-and community-informed solutions that overcome these physical, digital, and socioeconomic barriers to health so that all communities can flourish."

The partnership will also leverage diverse and talented students from the UIC Innovation Center to help grow SWITCH and its solutions.

SWITCH was recently chosen to participate in a 2021 Health Equity Innovation accelerator program to support entrepreneurs with solutions that advance health equity. The challenge from [MATTER](#), the global healthcare innovation hub headquartered in Chicago, and YWCA Metropolitan Chicago, focuses on projects such as those using data and research to promote equity in health care, plus projects to increase access to care and to address social determinants of health (SDOH) among others.

Don Bergh, associate director for Labs and Instructional Programs at the UIC Innovation Center said students selected for the accelerator program will be highly engaged.

"Our students are innovation-trained, and ready to jump into teams and projects that demand smart, flexible, motivated problem solvers."

The accelerator challenge specifically accepted applicants with a goal to develop and launch a solution to directly impact SDOH in Chicago's underrepresented communities. Participants have to be connected to a Chicagoland organization and preference was given to entrepreneurs of color.

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**OSF HealthCare** is an integrated health system owned and operated by The Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis, headquartered in Peoria, Illinois. OSF HealthCare employs nearly 24,000 Mission Partners in 150 locations, including 15 hospitals – 10 acute care, five critical access – with 2,089 licensed beds, and two colleges of nursing throughout Illinois and Michigan. The OSF HealthCare physician network employs more than 1,500 primary care, specialist and advanced practice providers. OSF HealthCare, through OSF Home Care Services, operates an extensive network of home health and hospice services. It also owns Pointcore, Inc., comprised of health care-related businesses; OSF HealthCare Foundation, the philanthropic arm for the organization; and OSF Ventures, which provides investment capital for promising health care innovation startups. More at [www.osfhealthcare.org](http://www.osfhealthcare.org). OSF

**OSF Innovation**, launched in 2016, is a multidisciplinary innovation center focused on internal and external innovation to solve the largest health care challenges. More at [www.osfinnovation.org](http://www.osfinnovation.org).

**City Tech Collaborative (City Tech)** is an urban solutions accelerator that tackles problems too big for any single sector or organization to solve alone. City Tech's work uses IoT sensing networks, advanced analytics, and urban design to create scalable, market ready solutions. Current initiatives address advanced mobility, healthy cities, connected infrastructure, and emerging growth opportunities. City Tech was born and raised in Chicago, and every city is a potential partner. Visit [www.CityTech.org](http://www.CityTech.org) to learn more.

**SWITCH**, which stands for Sustainable Wellness through Innovation, Technology, & Collaborative Health, is a collaboration platform that accelerates, innovates, and scales tech-enabled solutions. Our mission is to increase health equity and measurably improve community health delivery and wellness outcomes in Chicago's most underserved communities through collaboratively developing solutions; engaging residents and patients to ensure they have an active voice in solution creation; and leveraging a robust racial equity and inclusion (REI) methodology to address inherent bias in existing solution development processes.