



2025

*Making Public Health
an Illinois Priority*

PRE-CONFERENCE

AGENDA

TUESDAY | SEPTEMBER 9 | MORNING WORKSHOPS

7:30 AM – 8:00 AM

ARRIVAL AND REGISTRATION

8:00 AM – Noon

Mental Health First Aid- Part One

Jesse Fell Room A

Kristan Creek, Illinois Central College

This is an all-day workshop! Mental Health First Aid teaches you how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders. This training gives you the skills you need to reach out and provide initial support to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem and help connect them to the appropriate care.

8:30 AM – Noon

Poverty Simulation

Redbird A

YWCA McLean County

Step into the shoes of families living at or below the poverty line in this immersive Poverty Simulation experience. You will navigate the daily challenges of surviving with limited resources, making tough decisions about food, housing, transportation, and childcare. Join us for an immersive experience to understand the systemic barriers that many of our clients face.

9:00 AM – Noon

Forest Therapy Walk: A Practice of Presence in Nature

Off-Site - Constitution Trail

900 S. Linden St. | Underwood Park | Brander Shelter

Jessica Rodriguez

Jessica Rodriguez is a Chicago-based forest bathing guide through the Association of Nature and Forest Bathing. She is dedicated to opening the doors to holistic wellness and integrating nature-based solutions into the healthcare system. Forest bathing is a research-backed nature wellness practice where participants have an opportunity to slow down and notice themselves and the world around them.

Participants should dress in comfortable weather-appropriate clothing, bring a bottle of water, wear sunscreen/bug spray (if desired). No previous outdoor experience is required. This is not a hike or an ecological walk but rather a slow wander through nature.

Continued

TUESDAY | SEPTEMBER 9 | MORNING WORKSHOPS

10:00 AM – Noon

Stop the Bleed and Narcan Training

Jesse Fell Room B

Aaron Schaidle, McLean County Health Department

Attendees will learn how to take quick action in the event of a bleeding emergency or opioid overdose, buying valuable time until emergency services can arrive on-site. The Stop the Bleed portion will cover appropriate use of compression, rudimentary wound-packing techniques, and tourniquet application basics. The Narcan portion will cover the history of opioid use, proper application of nasal Narcan, and post-overdose response.

Illinois Association of Public Health Administrators Workshop

Redbird Ballroom E

Join your fellow administrators for a full-day workshop! This workshop is only open to local health department administrators and/or IAPHA members.

12:00 PM – 1:00 PM

LUNCH

On your own

TUESDAY | SEPTEMBER 9 | AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS

1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

The Humana Health Equity Think Tank: Building Bridges Between Public Health and Managed Care Organizations While Leveraging the Talents of CHWs

Redbird B

Celi Esquivel, Humana | Tracey Smith and Emily Inman, Illinois Public Health Association

This session is an opportunity to bring together various stakeholders to discuss building additional teamwork with MCOs, public health, and CHWs. Health Equity may affect vulnerable people, whether by socioeconomic level, race/ethnicity, rural or urban access to care, people with disabilities, or those experiencing transportation/food insecurity/housing barriers, etc. Advancing equitable population health in Illinois requires us all to collaborate extensively to ensure that all voices have a place at the table. We will brainstorm on what health equity means to you, your organization, or community through this in-person think tank session to help develop concrete action items or recommendations that “lift all boats.” We welcome participation from FQHCs, CHWs, MCOs, public health administrators, grant administrators, clinical administrators, and staff, hospitalists, and other healthcare champions. Social service organizations and any community-based organizations are also encouraged to attend. Our goal is to bring a forum where we can brainstorm on best practices, opportunities for improvement, and innovative approaches that benefit the health of people in Illinois.

Continued

TUESDAY | SEPTEMBER 9 | AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS

1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Understanding the Essentials of Legislation and Advocacy Redbird F

Conny Moody, Illinois Public Health Association

Legislative advocacy is essential for advancing policies that improve the health of our communities. This training provides the skills and knowledge needed to understand the legislative process and effectively influence policy at the state level. Participants will learn about the legislative process and how to communicate with legislators to advance their policy goals. This training is designed for individuals interested in policy advocacy and anyone who wants to educate and inform the legislative process.

1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Whole-Body Approach to Health Redbird G

Krishna Bhagat, Benedictine University

This is the fifth program session as part of the Whole-Body Approach to Health program series. During this final session, participants will reflect on the takeaways of the program, complete a post-program survey, and take part in a focus group to provide feedback regarding program effectiveness and satisfaction. This session is only open to attendees who have completed the previous four sessions virtually.

1:00 PM – 4:30 PM

Mental Health First Aid - Part Two Jesse Fell Room A

Kristan Creek, Illinois Central College

This is an all-day workshop! Mental Health First Aid teaches you how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders. This training gives you the skills you need to reach out and provide initial support to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem and help connect them to the appropriate care.

1:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Illinois Association of Public Health Administrators Workshop Redbird E

Join your fellow administrators for a full-day workshop! This workshop is only open to local health department administrators and/or IAPHA members.

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Stop the Bleed and Narcan Training Jesse Fell Room B

Aaron Schaidle, McLean County Health Department

The McLean County Health Department will host a combined Stop the Bleed and Narcan training. These courses will help participants learn how to take quick action in the event of a bleeding emergency or opioid overdose, buying valuable time until emergency services can arrive on-site. The Stop the Bleed portion will cover appropriate use of compression, rudimentary wound-packing techniques, and tourniquet application basics. The Narcan portion will cover the history of opioid use, proper application of nasal Narcan, and post-overdose response.

4:00 PM

ADJOURN



Conference Tracks

Behavioral Health and Wellness: Mind, Body, and Spirit



This track focuses on the holistic connection between mental, physical, and emotional health, with an emphasis on building healthier, more resilient individuals and communities. Sessions will explore strategies for promoting mental well-being, reducing stress, and fostering emotional resilience, both in personal and professional settings. Worksite wellness programs will also be highlighted, showcasing how organizations can support their employees' mental and physical health through effective programs that encourage work-life balance, reduce burnout, and create healthier, more productive work environments. Attendees will leave with practical tools for promoting well-being at the individual, community, and organizational levels.

Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion



Chronic diseases continue to be a leading cause of morbidity and mortality worldwide. This track will dive deep into prevention strategies, early detection, and innovative approaches to managing chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, HIV, viral hepatitis, and heart disease. Experts will discuss the role of prevention strategies, community-based interventions, and policy initiatives that can help reduce the burden of chronic diseases and promote long-term health in diverse populations.

Emerging Issues and Hot Topics



Stay on the cutting edge of public health by exploring the most current issues and innovations shaping the field. This track will tackle new health challenges, from emerging infectious diseases to health equity concerns and evolving policy trends. Experts will present real-time data, share forward-thinking solutions, and discuss what public health professionals need to know to adapt to rapidly changing environments and meet the demands of tomorrow's healthcare landscape.

Lifting Up the CHW Workforce



This track focuses on the critical role of Community Health Workers (CHWs) in addressing health disparities and improving access to care. Sessions will explore strategies for empowering CHWs, providing them with the skills and resources to better serve their communities, and building sustainable workforce development models. Participants will gain insight into effective training, policy advocacy, and how to create pathways for CHWs to make a lasting impact on public health outcomes.



2025

*Making Public Health
an Illinois Priority*

CONFERENCE

WEDNESDAY | SEPTEMBER 10 | CONFERENCE | DAY ONE

7:30 AM

REGISTRATION OPENS

Pre-Function Area

8:00 AM – 9:00 AM

BREAKFAST

Redbird Ballroom

9:00 AM – 10:15 AM

Plenary Session

Redbird Ballroom

Special Introduction

MMCAP Representative

Welcome | Keynote Address

The Waiting Room - Practical Skills for Facing Uncertainty

Andrea Flack-Wetherald



Andrea Flack-Wetherald is the Founder and President of The Center for Brave Communication, which helps mission-driven teams show up with courage and skill when conversations get hard—especially during seasons of change, growth, or leadership transition. Andrea and her team helps organizations build the practical communication habits that lead to trust, clarity, and a culture that can thrive, even in the messy middle of change. Andrea's unique framework blends her background in social work, improvised comedy, and research, creating a relatable, engaging, and evidence-based approach to navigating conflict. She's the bestselling author of two books and lives in the Akron, Ohio area with her husband and two children.

In this keynote, Andrea draws from her background to explore the emotional toll of “the waiting room”—those seasons when you're waiting for funding, waiting for answers, or waiting for something to shift. Uncertainty is a constant in public health, and much of it lies outside your control. Still, you're expected to lead, respond, and keep showing up for your community in the meantime. That kind of pressure wears on even the most resilient teams. Andrea offers practical tools to ease anxiety during seasons of change, plus a fresh framework for navigating tense conversations with clarity and care. Through brain science, humor, and deep empathy, she'll help you reconnect with your purpose, protect your energy, and operate from a place of grounded confidence. You'll leave feeling lighter, braver, and re-energized for the incredibly important work you do.

10:15 AM – 11:00 AM

Poster Presentation | Networking | Exhibitors

Book Signing by Andrea Flack-Wetherald

Redbird Ballroom and Pre-Function Area

Continued

11:15 AM – 12:15 PM

ROUND ONE | BREAKOUT SESSIONS



| **Building Sustainability for CHWs: New Billing Opportunities for Community-Based Organizations in 2026**
Redbird A

Rachael Telleen, The HAP Foundation | Tracey Smith, Illinois Public Health Association

By the end of 2026, it is anticipated that certified Community Health Workers, along with perinatal doulas and lactation specialists, will all be able to bill Medicaid and Medicare for certain services. This session will explore the process of billing for these services, including the review of Medicare and Medicaid guidelines. The benefits and cons of using a centralized HUB approach to help with billing will be discussed, along with approaches to coordinate CHW services in Illinois.



| **Creating Balance for Self-Care in the Professional and Personal Life**
Redbird E

Aidyn Ocon and Adlaide Holloway, Sinai Urban Health Institute

Attendees are invited to reflect together in a thoughtful and intentional space on our emotional well-being and how the way we process and express emotions plays a significant role in our mental health. This session will help attendees discover and define holistic ways to address mental health.



| **From Memory to Movement: Empowering Care Through Knowledge of Alzheimer's Disease and ALS**
Jesse Fell Room A

Anne Marie Doyle, Les Turner ALS Foundation | Peggy Peryam, Alzheimer's Association

Alzheimer's disease (AD) and Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) are both terminal neurodegenerative diseases that share commonalities; for instance, both can be difficult to diagnose, manage, and treat. In addition, there are multiple health equity challenges. Attendees will explore the current state of AD and ALS care in Illinois and the role CHWs can play in caring for people living with these diseases.



| **Leverage Social Media to Enhance Community Health Outreach**
Jesse Fell Room B

Michelle Sanders, Illinois Primary Health Care Association

This presentation will equip community health workers with the skills to use social media for real-time communication and advocacy. Through interactive activities and real-life case studies, attendees will gain valuable skills and explore the transformative potential of social media in bridging health disparities and fostering community engagement.

11:15 AM – 12:15 PM

ROUND ONE | BREAKOUT SESSIONS



| Strengthening Rural Health Through CHWs and Medical Providers

Redbird F

Elsy Ayala and Olidia Montoya, Cass County Health Department | Georgia Kapetaneas, Katie Elbert, and Rachel Thomas, University of Illinois College of Medicine Rockford

Rural communities face persistent health challenges, including limited access to care, provider shortages, cultural and language barriers, and long-standing health inequities. These issues are compounded by a sharp decline in trust in healthcare. Using real-world examples, this session explores how CHWs and Advanced Practice Physicians (APPs) can help rebuild trust and improve rural health outcomes.



| The Evolving Drug Landscape: Emerging Trends, Risks, and Responses

Redbird G

Chris Schaffner, Jolt Harm Reduction

The drug landscape is changing rapidly, with synthetic opioids, novel psychoactive substances, and dangerous adulterants driving record overdose rates and new health challenges. This session will explore emerging drug trends, their impact on public health, and the growing complexity of overdose prevention and response. Participants will learn how these shifts affect healthcare providers, harm reduction programs, behavioral health professionals, and community outreach teams. Interactive case studies and real-time data will highlight practical strategies to reduce harm and adapt services. Attendees will leave with tools and knowledge to navigate the evolving drug supply and protect the communities they serve.



| Unveiling the Illinois Oral Health Plan V: Optimizing Oral Health—A Cohesive Approach with Community Innovation

Beaufort Meeting Room

Megan Reutter, Illinois Oral Health Coalition | Mona VanKanegan, Illinois Department of Public Health

Health is everything - it allows us to work, commune with our families, and build our communities. Poor oral health directly affects overall health. This session will highlight the significance of stakeholder and health system engagement in shaping the IOHP V—its priorities, goals, and strategies. Looking ahead, IOHP V builds on the foundation of IOHP IV and outlines action steps for the next five years, including addressing known and emerging challenges, maintaining and expanding existing evidence-based and promising practices, and testing and implementing new and innovative approaches to improve education, access to care, and oral health outcomes.

12:15 PM – 1:30 PM

LUNCH

Redbird Ballroom

Special Introduction

Deloitte Consulting LLP Representatives

Poster Presentation | Networking | Exhibitors

Continued

1:45 PM – 2:45 PM

ROUND TWO | BREAKOUT SESSIONS



| CHWs as Catalysts for Change: Bridging Gaps in Rural Recovery-Oriented Systems of Care

Jesse Fell Room A

Mike Tyson, Southern Illinois Resources and Advocacy Center | Dan Pyles, Take Action Today

This presentation explores the pivotal role of Community Health Workers (CHWs) in addressing substance use and chronic homelessness in rural Illinois. It examines how CHWs serve as catalysts for change by bridging gaps between services, fostering multi-sector collaboration, and improving access to care in rural communities. The session highlights strategies for empowering CHWs, overcoming implementation challenges, and measuring impact within recovery-oriented systems of care. Drawing from real-world examples, it offers practical insights for integrating CHWs into public health initiatives, particularly in rural settings. Attendees will gain actionable strategies to leverage CHWs to address health disparities and improve outcomes.



| CHW Certification Program

Redbird C

Sarahjini Nunn, Illinois Department of Public Health

The Community Health Worker Certification and Reimbursement Act (410 ILCS 67) creates a statewide CHW Certification program within the Illinois Department of Public Health to ensure high-quality services provided by CHWs can be reimbursed through the Medicaid program. Learn about CHW certification for individuals, community-base organizations, and academic training programs.



| HealthPrism™ Unveiled: Transforming Community Public Health Strategies from Reactive to Proactive

Redbird A

Donald Kauerauf and Mike Daggitt, Deloitte Consulting

This session will explore the innovative capabilities of HealthPrism™ in revolutionizing public health strategies. This session will demonstrate how HealthPrism's advanced analytics can identify at-risk populations and guide tailored, preemptive health interventions. Participants will engage in an interactive platform, examining real-world public health challenges and utilizing HealthPrism™ to strategize effective, data-driven solutions. Learn how predictive analysis can transition our approach from managing symptoms to preventing them before they arise. Leave empowered with practical knowledge on employing HealthPrism™ to not just envision but enact a proactive transformation in community health dynamics.



| How to Win Frenemies and Influence People: Getting Along in a Divided World

Redbird E

Allie Boman, Boman Communications, LLC

Tired of walking a tightrope when communicating with politically diverse communities? Discover practical techniques to transform tense stand-offs into productive dialogue without compromising your values or burning out. Learn how to build wide, sturdy bridges for communication instead of tiptoeing across fragile, tightropes of perfect phrasing. Develop active listening skills to reveal shared values hiding in surface disagreements. We'll share immediately usable strategies to navigate your next difficult conversation or publication, whether with vaccine-hesitant parents, skeptical community leaders, or entrenched policymakers.

Continued



| **Men's Health and Suicide Prevention**
Redbird F

Andrew Lerch, Illinois Department of Public Health

In what is increasingly gathering attention in both public health and the media, men's mental health and the disproportionate impact of suicide on boys and men are detailed within this presentation. In addition to analyzing the statistics related to male suicide, the suggested root causes contributing to the current state of men's mental health will be explored, as well as highlighting policy and programming efforts that are being instituted to intervene in what is both a local and global concern.



| **Reduce Stress and Procrastination with Mindful Breaks and the Pomodoro Technique**
Jesse Fell Room B

Sana Kausar Habiya, Northeastern Illinois University

Discover how the Pomodoro Technique decreases stress, overcomes procrastination, and improves overall well-being. This breakout session explores the science underlying this time management method, illustrating how frequent short breaks can enable mental focus, emotional agility, and physical well-being. The attendees will learn concrete ways of adapting the Pomodoro Technique to improve productivity and balance in their work and personal lives.



| **Transitioning and Utilizing Minimally Invasive Dentistry**
Beaufort Meeting Room

Jonathan Norris, Montshire Dental PC

Minimally Invasive Dentistry (MID) is focused on preventive and healing therapeutics with an emphasis on limiting the removal of endogenous tooth structures. MID involves simple treatment options that are often less costly and time-consuming, including antimicrobials, regenerative therapies, and restorations/sealants." These simple treatment options are preferred and often more desirable because they are more accessible and reduce the infrastructure required for traditional dentistry. Further outcomes suggest superiority over traditional/legacy intervention.

3:00 PM - 4:00 PM

ROUND THREE | BREAKOUT SESSIONS



| **Behavioral Health: A CHW's Journey to Healing**
Redbird A

Kim Jay, Sinai Urban Health Institute

This interactive session explores behavioral health and wellness through the lens of mind, body, and spirit, emphasizing cultural humility and trauma-informed care for CHWs. Participants will engage in storytelling and drawing activities to reflect on their own well-being, recognize trauma triggers, and develop strategies for self-care and patient support. Through a Wellness Tree exercise, Story Circles, and Trigger Mapping, attendees will gain actionable insights to navigate behavioral health challenges while maintaining resilience. By the end of the session, attendees will leave with practical tools to foster holistic wellness in themselves and the communities they serve.

Continued



| Building a Financial Safeguard for Your Local Health Department

Redbird G

Emily Hendrickson, Adams County Health Department

In challenging financial times, local health departments can secure their own safety net of revenue-producing programs. It is critical to understand where growth opportunities exist and how to prepare your team for a successful reimbursement model. This presentation will review the revenue cycle and billing and coding strategies at the local health department level. The other portion of this presentation will review successful growth strategies used by one local health department.



| Building Trust from the Start: Addressing Vaccine Hesitancy in Early Childhood Settings

Redbird F

Katie McConnell and Beth Davis, Adams County Health Department

Learn how a local health department partnered with early childhood education centers to better understand and address vaccine hesitancy among families. Through community surveys, digital innovation, and provider engagement, the team developed targeted strategies to build trust and improve vaccine confidence. This session will highlight key findings, showcase the development of a mobile app and "Vaccine Talks" video series, and share practical tools for replication. Attendees will engage in interactive discussions and leave with a resource toolkit. Join us to explore real-world solutions to a growing public health challenge.



| Centering Community Engagement in Illinois Oral Health Priorities

Beaufort Meeting Room

Annaliese Cothron, American Institute of Dental Public Health

Drawing from national projects by the American Institute of Dental Public Health, this session highlights how states have addressed oral health disparities through justice-centered frameworks, cross-sector collaborations, and strategic advocacy through community-engaged research. Participants will examine population health outcomes in relation to veterans, people with disabilities, rural populations, and LGBTQIA+ communities. Using live audience engagement tools, attendees will contribute insights and strategies to contextualize oral health priorities for Illinois. The session will inspire action toward integrating oral health into broader equity and chronic disease efforts across the state.



| Centering Grief Experiences: The Role of CHWs in Grief-Informed Care

Jesse Fell Room A

Maureen Burns, Melissa Gomez, and Kaitlyn Macias, The HAP Foundation

What do grieving people need? How does grief impact health? We will explore the diverse instances of loss that are part of the human experience and describe some of the varying human experiences of grief. We will explore why grief is so stigmatized and why talking about grief matters. Grief will be discussed as an emerging determinant of health, impacting both physical and emotional wellness. We will highlight the role of Community Health Workers (CHWs) in supporting grieving people, creating safe spaces to honor grief, and connecting people with supportive resources.



| Exploring Effective CHW Training Modalities
Redbird E

Tracey Smith and Claire Hughes, Illinois Public Health Association

Attendees will learn effective training practices to address challenges in an evolving workforce environment. This session will cover curriculum design, teaching methods, and practical application strategies, targeting community-based organizations, and healthcare education programs involved in developing the Illinois CHW workforce.



| Healthcare Navigation: A Model for Screening for Affirming Providers for the LGBTQIA+ Community
Jesse Fell Room B

Jocelyn Puccini, Youth Outlook

The 2022 US Trans-Survey reported that nearly one-quarter of transgender people reported that they did not see a doctor when they needed to in the last 12 months due to fear of mistreatment. Fear of mistreatment and inability to access care lead to health disparities that are far too common across LGBTQIA+ communities. Youth Outlook, a LGBTQIA+ youth-serving agency, created a new model of healthcare navigation to address these disparities. This session will cover the creation of the LGBTQIA+ Health and Wellness Navigation model and teach attendees unique steps for vetting affirming health and wellness providers for the LGBTQIA+ community.

4:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Special Session



| Common Respiratory Infections and the Impact of Vaccines in Adults
Redbird A

Mary Kate Johnson, Pfizer

This presentation will cover the epidemiology and clinical characteristics of common respiratory infections and the impact that vaccines have on prevention of these infections.

IPHA Section Meet and Greet Hour
Redbird Ballroom

5:30 PM – 7:00 PM

BINGO AND GAMES
Redbird Ballroom

7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

KARAOKE
Redbird Ballroom





2025

*Making Public Health
an Illinois Priority*

CONFERENCE

THURSDAY | SEPTEMBER 11 | CONFERENCE | DAY TWO

6:30 AM

REGISTRATION

Pre-Function Area

7:30 AM – 8:30 AM

BREAKFAST

Redbird Ballroom

8:00 AM – 9:00 AM

IPHA Annual Business Meeting

Redbird A

CHW Conversation Café

Redbird Ballroom

9:00 AM – 10:15 AM

Welcome | Keynote Address

Redbird Ballroom

Prioritizing Public Health Advocacy: Going Back to the Basics to Rebuild Trust with the Public and Policy Makers

Abby Tighe, The National Public Health Coalition (NPHC)



Abby Tighe is a founding member of the National Public Health Coalition (NPHC), an organization that aims to educate about and advocate for the protection and advancement of public health as a vital government service. Abby is a former CDC public health advisor, fired by the Trump Administration in early 2025. Following her termination, Abby helped create Fired But Fighting, a grassroots effort to support fired federal workers that overtime has grown, leading to the founding of the NPHC. Prior to CDC, Abby served as the communications lead for a CDC-funded research grant at Emory, held an associate role at a PR firm, and participated in the Pathways Program at HRSA where she focused on opioid crisis-related needs and response in New England. Abby is originally from the Metro-Atlanta area, and currently resides in Atlanta with her husband and son.

After being fired from their jobs at CDC, Abby Tighe and fellow colleagues came together to found The National Public Health Coalition (NPHC), a public health advocacy organization. During this presentation, Mrs. Tighe will highlight how she and her colleagues have worked to build a grassroots public health coalition, detail existing gaps and opportunities in public health advocacy, and discuss how the field of public health can work together to rebuild trust with the public and policy makers.

10:15 AM – 11:00 AM

Poster Presentation | Networking | Exhibitors

Redbird Ballroom and Pre-Function Area

Continued

11:15 AM – 12:15 PM

ROUND FOUR | BREAKOUT SESSIONS



| **Authentic Leadership: Charting Your Own Path**
Redbird A

Angela Ellison, UIC Office of Community Engagement and Neighborhood Health Partnerships and Mile Square Health Center | Lisa Phillipson, Positively Speaking with Lisa

This session is designed to help Community Health Workers (CHWs) embrace their leadership potential. As trusted messengers and advocates, CHWs already lead in their communities. This session builds on those strengths, focusing on core leadership values—trust, empathy, integrity, and transparency. Through reflection and discussion, participants will explore their personal leadership style and learn strategies to guide teams, solve problems, and influence change. Whether stepping into a new role or enhancing your impact, this session offers tools, real-world examples, and support to lead with authenticity and purpose in every community setting.



| **CHW Certification Program**
Jesse Fell Room A

Sarahjini Nunn, Illinois Department of Public Health

The Community Health Worker Certification and Reimbursement Act (410 ILCS 67) creates a statewide CHW Certification program within the Illinois Department of Public Health to ensure high-quality services provided by CHWs can be reimbursed through the Medicaid program. Learn about CHW certification for individuals, community-based organizations, and academic training programs.



| **Microbes and Mist: Behavioral Influences on the Oral Microbiome in Children**
Beaufort Meeting Room

Susana Calderon, Illinois State University

This presentation examines how early oral hygiene behaviors in children, particularly tooth brushing habits, influence the development and stability of the oral microbiome during childhood. Drawing on recent microbiological and behavioral research, it highlights how variations in brushing frequency can disrupt microbial balance. The session emphasizes the importance of early preventive strategies for children's oral health through an interdisciplinary lens.



| **Nurturing the Whole Self: Building Resilient Individuals, Educators, and Communities Through Mind, Body, and Spirit Wellness**
Redbird E

Nikki Hillier, Misty Rhoads, Aimee Janssen-Robinson, and Amanda Harvey, Eastern Illinois University

This presentation, led by faculty and one who is certified in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), focuses on the connection between mind, body, and spirit, and how educators, staff, students, and community members can thrive together by supporting each other's mental, emotional, and physical health. Attendees will leave with practical, actionable tools to implement in their personal lives and organizations. The session will explore how promoting mental well-being, reducing stress, and fostering emotional resilience can improve health and well-being. Participants will get hands-on experiences in mindfulness, breathwork, and guided relaxation exercises to incorporate into their daily routines.

Continued



| **Small Habits, Big Changes: Tools to Prevent Chronic Disease**

Redbird G

Sana Kausar Habiya, Jaweriya Azeem, and Krishna Patel, Northeastern Illinois University

This breakout session highlights the power of small, yet possible lifestyle modifications to prevent and manage chronic diseases like diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, etc. Attendees will learn secrets of overcoming barriers, establishing SMARTER goals, and incorporating healthy lifestyles like a balanced diet, exercise, and stress reduction. Interactive exercises, discussions, and handouts will be provided to attendees, which will allow them to implement positive changes toward long-term wellness and health.



| **Protecting Smiles and Lives: Nicotine, Oral Health, and Chronic Disease Prevention for Illinois Healthcare Professionals**

Redbird F

Costadina Aneziris, Illinois ADVANCE | Monico Nunez, Bureau, Putnam and Marshall County Health Departments

Join us for an insightful session discussing nicotine and its burden on public health. We will explore the health consequences of various administration vehicles (such as vaping), the effect on communities, areas where different types of healthcare professionals, from dentists to CHWs, can make an impact, and resources such as academic detailing. You don't want to miss this dynamic session exploring this evolving identified need and actionable tools to support public health!

12:15 PM – 1:30 PM

LUNCH | AWARDS

Redbird Ballroom

Special Introduction

BCU Representatives

1:30 PM – 2:00 PM

Poster Presentation | Networking | Exhibitors

Redbird Ballroom and Pre-Function Area

2:00 PM – 3:00 PM

ROUND FIVE | BREAKOUT SESSIONS



| **Beyond the Screen: A Health System's Approach to Addressing Interpersonal Safety in Real Time**

Redbird C

Patricia Lyons, Shanequa Taylor, and Mariá Wilburn, Endeavor Health

This session will highlight how a health system strengthened its response to interpersonal safety concerns identified through standardized social needs screening. Presenters will share how CHWs were trained to respond using trauma-informed approaches, supported by enhanced workflows and IT tools, including Epic documentation and reporting. The session will also explore how collaboration with victim services supported real-time safety planning and systemwide coordination. Participants will hear a powerful patient story, reflect on implementation strategies, and leave with practical tools to apply in their own settings. Designed for CHWs, administrators, and community partners, this session centers on action and collaboration.



| **CHWs, A Movement, Not A Moment!**

Redbird A

Leticia Boughton-Price and Wandy Hernandez, Illinois Community Health Worker Association

CHWs have been associated with many historical moments in Illinois. But after the dust settles and people are back to doing business as usual, the need for CHWs does not go away. The Illinois CHW Association believes in the impact and value of CHWs as an essential part of the workforce, therefore supporting CHWs as a movement, not just a moment. In this session, we will discuss the history, impact, and future of CHWs from a statewide CHW association's lens.



| **CHWs: Strengthening the Maternal Child Workforce**

Jesse Fell Room A

Alyce Roberson and Veronica Sek, Sinai Urban Health Institute | Claire Hughes and Tracey Smith, Illinois Public Health Association

This panel will highlight innovative strategies to strengthen the maternal and child health workforce by addressing critical gaps in care and workforce capacity across under-resourced communities. Presenters will share findings from a 2025 regional workforce survey spanning 16 Southern Illinois counties—the first of its kind—revealing urgent needs in maternal health systems. The discussion will also spotlight SUHI's groundbreaking apprenticeship program, which builds sustainable talent pipelines through an earn-while-you-learn model. By integrating culturally competent CHWs and doulas into care teams, this approach enhances clinical outcomes, promotes birth equity, and offers a scalable model for workforce development. Attendees will gain actionable insights to replicate similar models and strengthen community-rooted maternal care.



| **Health Disparities in Reentry**

Jesse Fell Room B

DeMarsh Tarver, Agape NFP

The process of reintegrating into society for individuals coming out of prison is already complex, and coupled with living with HIV, the challenges become even more multifaceted. This session will explore the significant obstacles many individuals face in accessing healthcare, maintaining consistent HIV treatment, and dealing with the stigma associated with both criminal history and HIV status. The session will also discuss some of the barriers, including limited access to equitable healthcare, employment, housing instability, mental health, substance abuse, and lack of community and family support.

Continued



| **Oral Health and the CHW**
Beaufort Meeting Room

Monica Dunn and Michelle Whitted, Illinois Department of Public Health | Stephanie Evans, Gibson Area Hospital and Health Services

Oral and systemic health affect each other because the mouth and the body are connected. Ensuring clients are educated to care for their oral health not only impacts the mouth and teeth but also the health of the body. CHWs have a unique opportunity to help clients access oral health care and provide important oral health information and education. The Illinois Public Health Association offers an oral health certificate training program to introduce CHWs to the oral cavities, oral diseases, disease prevention, and oral health education. This session discusses how the oral health training program equips CHWs to assist their clients with oral health needs. Two CHWs will share their experiences engaging clients using the knowledge they gained through the oral health training program.



| **Private and Public Partnerships to Sustain, Elevate, and Expand the CHW Workforce**
Redbird E

Makeda Coutee, Health and Medicine Policy Research Group | Kim Jay, Sinai Urban Health Institute | Nora Garcia, Healthy Communities Foundation | Darcie Moeller, Cook County Department of Public Health | Gillian Knight, Healthy Communities Foundation

This session explores how public-private partnerships in suburban Cook County are sustaining and elevating the CHW workforce. Participants will learn how to align philanthropic and public health infrastructure to support long-term workforce pipelines. Through interactive storytelling and collaborative dialogue, attendees will explore what's working, where barriers remain, and how to co-create equity-based workforce models. CHWs and program leaders will share firsthand experiences from the field. The session offers a replicable model for uplifting CHWs as essential to the future of public health.



| **Rediscovering Play: A Prescription for Better Health and Stronger Communities**
Redbird F

Clover Johnson, Art of Healing Trauma

This session explores the transformative power of play as a tool for improving well-being in adults. It highlights how playful activities can aid in prevention and intervention by stimulating feel-good neurochemicals. Through interactive demonstrations, participants will experience firsthand how play promotes movement, mindfulness, and connection. The session empowers CHWs and other professionals with practical strategies to integrate play into health promotion and behavioral wellness initiatives. By emphasizing the mind-body-spirit connection, the presentation offers innovative ways to build healthier individuals and stronger communities through joyful engagement.

3:15 PM – 4:00 PM

Closing Session | Exhibitor Prizes
Redbird Ballroom

4:00 PM

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