



IPHA 85TH ANNUAL PUBLIC HEALTH WORKFORCE CONFERENCE

Together We Thrive

FEATURED SPEAKERS GUIDE

Breakout Session Presenters

**Crowne Plaza Springfield - Convention Center
Springfield, Illinois**



SEPTEMBER 1-3 | 2026



Breakout Sessions Presenters

The heart of the conference lives here! Our breakout sessions offer a deep dive into the topics driving public health forward, with presentations organized across five tracks:

- Behavioral Health and Wellness
- Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
- Emerging Issues and Hot Topics
- Lifting Up the CHW Workforce
- Operationalizing Public Health

Speakers are listed in alphabetical order by last name, and each profile is identified by their corresponding track logo, making it easy to find the voices aligned with the work that matters most to you. Whether you are looking to sharpen your skills, explore a new area of practice, or bring fresh ideas back to your team, there is a session waiting for you.





Breakout Session Presenters



Bethanie Albrecht, MS, CERC

Woodford County Health Department

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Operationalizing Public Health**



Biography

Bethanie Albrecht, MS, CERC, is a certified emergency response coordinator and public health administrator with over a decade of experience in preparedness, response, and volunteer management. She currently leads operations at Woodford County Health Department and teaches Medical Countermeasures: Point of Dispensing through TEEX. Her work spans grant planning, community resource development, and metric innovation—grounded in equity, clarity, and minimal staff burden. Bethanie holds a master's in Biosecurity and Disaster Preparedness and is recognized for pioneering naloxone programming and rural health tools.



Breakout Session Presenters



Rebecca Anderson

Will County Health Department

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Operationalizing Public Health**



Biography

Rebecca Anderson holds a bachelor's degree in education from Lewis University. She has worked for the Will County Health Department for 21 years, holding a variety of job titles. In her current role, since 2008, as the All Our Kids (AOK) Early Childhood Network Coordinator, Rebecca has maintained a successful and continuously growing collaborative. In February 2020, Rebecca launched the first community online referral system in Will County, known as IRIS. The Integrated Referral Intake System (IRIS), along with the help of her network partners, has helped over 8,000 families get connected to resources. In just six years, she has grown the online referral system to over 200 providers in Will County and over 15,000 referrals.

Rebecca has two children (one daughter and a son), ages 26 and 22. She married in 2021, her husband has 3 adult children (one just got out of the Army and one currently in the Marines stationed in the ocean on deployment) and 4 grandchildren and 1 baby girl that is due in July 2026. She has been a lifelong Will County resident and has a passion to help people.



Breakout Session Presenters



Costadina Aneziris, PharmD, BCGP

Illinois ADVANCE at the University of Illinois Chicago

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Disease Prevention and Health Promotion** 

Biography

Costadina (Tina) Aneziris is a clinical pharmacist and clinical instructor in the Department of Pharmacy Practice at the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) Retzky College of Pharmacy and an academic detailer with Illinois ADVANCE. She earned her PharmD and BA in anthropology from UIC. Her previous experience is as a clinical specialist in long-term care working in medication therapy management. Tina holds a board certification in geriatric pharmacy. She is passionate about improving patient care and public health. Tina serves as a clinical content coordinator for Illinois ADVANCE.



Breakout Session Presenters



Heidi Arthur

Health Management Associate

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Lifting Up the CHW Workforce**



Biography

Heidi is a systems transformation advisor focused on promoting approaches that facilitate timely access to whole person health care for individuals and communities affected by health disparities. Her background includes 20 years of consulting for states, counties, provider networks, managed care plans, and community hubs.



Breakout Session Presenters



Elsy Ayala

Cass County Health Department

Presentation Day(s)

- **Thursday, September 3, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Lifting Up the CHW Workforce** 

Biography

Elsy Ayala serves as the Lead Community Health Worker at the Cass County Health Department (CCHD), where she leads, mentors, and supports a team of Community Health Workers to ensure effective, coordinated service delivery across the community. In this role, she champions equitable access by connecting individuals to insurance enrollment, food assistance, utility support, and interpretation and translation services—helping eliminate barriers and expand access to care for underserved populations.

Elsy also leads CCHD's Colorectal Cancer Screening and Education Program, advancing community education, outreach, and screening initiatives. Through this work, she raises awareness, promotes early detection, and reduces barriers to preventive screening—critical to improving health outcomes in rural communities.

Bilingual in Spanish, Elsy strengthens engagement with diverse populations by providing culturally responsive outreach and services. She also serves as the primary contact for the Cass County Interagency Group, where she fosters cross-sector collaboration among local agencies to streamline referrals, strengthen partnerships, and improve service coordination. Through her leadership, program oversight, and collaborative efforts, Elsy drives measurable improvements in access, prevention, and community connection—advancing health equity and strengthening the impact of the Community Health Worker workforce in Cass County.



Breakout Session Presenters



Satori Bailey

Hunter Family Foundation

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Lifting Up the CHW Workforce**



Biography

Satori (she/her) previously served as the Illinois Executive Director at America Needs You (ANY), where she led the growth and expansion of the Illinois site's career development fellowship program for first-generation college students. Prior to ANY, Satori served as the Director of Asset Building Programs at the Center for Economic Progress, where she led the state's largest Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program serving over 18,000 individuals and families across Illinois. She developed an innovative tax savings program and a volunteer-led financial coaching program that were nationally recognized. She was also a proud Steering Committee member of the national Taxpayer Opportunity Network, organized by Prosperity Now. Satori received her Bachelor's degree in Resource Economics from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and her Master's in Social Work from the University of Chicago's Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy, and Practice.



Breakout Session Presenters



Angela Baran

Healthcare Foundation of Northern Lake County

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Lifting Up The CHW Workforce**



Biography

Angela Baran holds a masters from DePaul University's School of Public Service and has experience in healthcare grants management and development through her work with the Lake County Health Department and Community Health Center. A life-long resident of Northeastern Lake County, she understands both the needs and assets of the community. She is committed to improving the health of the community through education and the provision of quality services. She joined the Healthcare Foundation of Northern Lake County in 2011.



Breakout Session Presenters



Gina Massuda Barnett

Michael Reese Health Trust

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Lifting Up the CHW Workforce**



Biography

Gina Massuda Barnett is a Program Director at the Michael Reese Health Trust (Michael Reese), where she leverages advocacy, strategic partnerships, and resources to strengthen the health workforce. Prior to joining Michael Reese, Gina led health equity and community transformation initiatives at the Cook County Department of Public Health, the state-certified public health authority for most of suburban Cook County. She also currently serves on the Board of Directors for Cook County Health.



Breakout Session Presenters



Gloria E. Barrera, MSN, RN, PEL-CSN, PLNC
University of Illinois Chicago

Presentation Day(s)

- **Thursday, September 3, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Lifting Up the CHW Workforce** 

Biography

Gloria E. Barrera, MSN, RN, PEL-CSN, PLNC, is a public health nurse, educator, and Director of the RN to BSN Program at the University of Illinois Chicago. She is a nationally recognized leader in school health, health equity, and nursing advocacy. Gloria co-founded the Society of Latinx Nurses and served as President of the Illinois Association of School Nurses, where she launched the state's first School Nurse Lobby Day and advanced initiatives to expand school health capacity and vaccine education. She is also a co-founder of Nurses Shift Change, a national movement focused on nurse policy engagement.

In partnership with the Illinois Public Health Association, Gloria leads efforts to educate community health workers through an Immunization Education Series, equipping them with tools to build vaccine confidence, strengthen communication, and promote equitable immunization uptake.

An award-winning leader, she was named Nurse Influencer of the Year by ANA-Illinois and recognized as one of the de Beaumont Foundation's 40 Under Forty in Public Health.



Breakout Session Presenters



Allie Boman

Boman Communications, LLC

Presentation Day(s)

- **Thursday, September 3, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Operationalizing Public Health**



Biography

Allie is a science editor, student of public health, and communications professional. Her team of specialists helps health organizations reach audiences effectively. For the first 15 years of her working life, Allie led a community-based nonprofit. When she moved to Illinois 7 years ago, she began writing and editing research reports on public health. She expanded the business in 2023 to include design, strategy, social media, and websites. To support this work, she began a master's in public health and expects to cross the finish line this year!

As a volunteer, Allie participates in and leads community wellness efforts in her now-home town of Highwood, Illinois. She has four kids, a rowdy husband, and dog named Indy who tries to keep up.



Breakout Session Presenters



Graham Briggs

Illinois Department of Public Health

Presentation Day(s)

- Thursday, September 3, 2026

Track(s)

- Operationalizing Public Health 

Biography

Graham Briggs has built a career in public health with over 25 years of experience in state and local public health agencies. He worked in the laboratory environment before moving into epidemiology and management. Graham managed an Infectious Diseases Control Program for a decade, has served as a Director of Public Health in Minnesota, and as Illinois' State Epidemiologist over the years. In his current role as Division Chief for Emerging Health Issues at IDPH he oversees a variety of programs focused on novel and unique challenges to the field.



Breakout Session Presenters



Ian Brooks, PhD

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Presentation Day(s)

- **Thursday, September 3, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Operationalizing Public Health**



Biography

Ian Brooks, PhD, is Director of the Center for Health Informatics at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's School of Information Sciences. His work bridges data science and public health, with a focus on integrating diverse data sources to inform population health and support decision-making. His work with WHO led to the Center being designated as the PAHO/WHO Collaborating Center for Information Systems for Health. Dr. Brooks previously led the development of several public health platforms, including INDICATOR, a One Health system for real-time health monitoring; the CDC Malaria Map; and the PAHO/WHO Anti-infodemic Virtual Center for the Americas. Currently, he is leading the development of the Illinois Health Explorer, a tool linking environmental data with health outcomes to guide local policy and preparedness. Previously, Dr. Brooks served as Director of Health Sciences at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications and Co-Director of the Bioinformatics Core at the University of Illinois Chicago's Center for Translational Science.



Breakout Session Presenters



Maureen Burns

The HAP Foundation

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Behavioral Health and Wellness**



Biography

Maureen Burns (she/her/ella) is a Community Health Worker and the Director of Community Health at The HAP Foundation. Maureen leads a growing CHW team that seeks to address hospice utilization disparities and empower community members through education on serious illness topics. Maureen has over 20 years of experience working in health care and a Master of Public Health (MPH) degree. Maureen is proud to be a leader who identifies as Disabled (Deaf) and is a passionate advocate for the use of antiracist and liberatory practices to destroy systems of oppression. Maureen believes in the healing and transformational power of the collective; she believes in centering and growing communities of care, mutual aid, and other practices of solidarity. Maureen carries with her deep personal experiences of grief, which inform her work. In turn, she feels blessed to be able to help others to navigate their grief experiences; the work nourishes her and helps her find purpose in her own grief. In addition to her work at The HAP Foundation, Maureen also serves as a CHW instructor for several programs. Here she has the opportunity to use a popular education approach to teach, engage, support, and motivate the next generation of CHWs.



Breakout Session Presenters



Britt Cain

Carle Health

Presentation Day(s)

- **Thursday, September 3, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Lifting Up the CHW Workforce** 

Biography

Brittany “Britt” Cain is a Supervisor of Community Health Workers at Carle at the Riverfront based in Danville, Illinois, who believes meaningful change begins with compassion, connection, and showing up for others. She leads and supports frontline teams working to address social determinants of health and remove barriers that prevent individuals and families from thriving. Her work is rooted in the belief that everyone deserves access to care, dignity, and opportunity.

Brittany holds a bachelor’s degree in science from Eastern Illinois University, which laid the foundation for her commitment to community advocacy and people-centered solutions. Through her professional journey, she has gained firsthand insight into the challenges communities face—and the powerful impact that dedicated, empathetic leadership can have.

Outside of work, Brittany is a proud mother of three, an avid ultra runner, and an active volunteer within her community, roles that have shaped her resilience, perspective, and purpose. Whether at work, at home, or in the community, she is driven by a desire to uplift others and lead by example. Brittany’s message centers on meeting people where they are, leading with empathy, and believing in the power of everyday actions to create lasting change.



Breakout Session Presenters



Brian Chen, PhD

University of Illinois Springfield

Presentation Day(s)

- Wednesday, September 2, 2026
- Thursday, September 3, 2026

Track(s)

- Disease Prevention and Health Promotion 
- Emerging Issues and Hot Topics 
- Operationalizing Public Health 

Biography

Brian Chen, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Public Health at the University of Illinois Springfield. He teaches graduate courses in biostatistics, social determinants of health, health economics, and research methods. His scholarship centers on health equity, community-engaged public health practice, and the integration of artificial intelligence and human-centered design into public health. He is dedicated to mentorship, interdisciplinary collaboration, and the advancement of practical approaches that strengthen student learning and community health.



Breakout Session Presenters



Makeda Coutee

Health & Medicine Policy Research Group

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Lifting Up the CHW Workforce** 

Biography

Makeda Coutee is the Workforce Initiatives Manager at Health & Medicine Policy Research Group, where she leads efforts to strengthen and sustain the Community Health Worker (CHW) workforce across Illinois. Her work sits at the intersection of workforce development, Medicaid policy, and community-based systems change, with a focus on helping organizations navigate emerging reimbursement opportunities and build long-term sustainability.

She focuses on advancing the CHW workforce through partnership-building, sustainable strategy development, and policy advocacy that centers equity and community voices. Makeda is passionate about ensuring CHWs are recognized, fairly compensated, and fully integrated into evolving healthcare systems.

Makeda brings a multidisciplinary background in public health, healthcare management, grants management, and grassroots organizing. Grounded in both strategy and lived community realities, her work is rooted in a commitment to advancing health equity through collaboration and systems change.



Breakout Session Presenters



Mike Daggitt

Deloitte Consulting

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Operationalizing Public Health**



Biography

Mike Daggitt is an advanced data and analytics leader at Deloitte and has spent the last six years developing and implementing HealthPrism for a variety of federal, state, and local clients. He brings 25 years of total IT experience with a focus on integrating disparate data sources to derive insights that help government leaders make strategic and focused decisions for addressing critical public health needs. Mike brings HealthPrism to his clients to support important public health initiatives like combatting the opioid crisis and COVID-19, boosting benefits enrollment for underserved and underrepresented communities, and conducting outreach to those with high barriers to accessing care. Mike and Donald worked closely together in Missouri during the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to collaborate to advance the use of HealthPrism as public health in the United States evolves.



Breakout Session Presenters



Chris Egelston
Midland Institute

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Emerging Issues and Hot Topics**



Biography

Chris Egelston serves as Community Engagement Leader at the Midland Institute for Entrepreneurship, leading national expansion of the CEO (Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities) Program — a year-long, experiential entrepreneurship education initiative now operating in 53 Illinois communities and 75+ nationwide. Chris helps communities use youth programming as a strategic tool for driving local engagement, career pathway exposure, and talent retention. A TEDx speaker and veteran of more than 6,000 presentations, he recently presented at the ICAHN Economic Development Conference on the role young entrepreneurs play in building stronger, more resilient communities.



Breakout Session Presenters



Jeffery Erdman

Illinois Public Health Association

Presentation Day(s)

- **Thursday, September 3, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Emerging Issues and Hot Topics**



Biography

Jeffery M. Erdman, a nationally recognized public health program administrator, evaluator, and capacity-building provider, currently serves as the Deputy Executive Director for the Illinois Public Health Association.

Prior to his tenure at IPHA, Mr. Erdman coordinated numerous public health programs and evaluation projects for the Illinois Department of Public Health and related public health organizations.

Mr. Erdman has more than 30 years of experience in the public health programming field, including decades of experience implementing social determinants of health, health equity, HIV/AIDS/STI, workforce development, grant writing, and revenue generation programming for local health departments, community-based organizations, and other healthcare providers.

Besides these accomplishments, Mr. Erdman is a Distinguished Fellow of the Public Health Academy of the National Academies of Practice, he sits on the American Public Health Association's Council of Affiliates, and he has been honored with awards from the Illinois Department of Public Health, the American Association for World Health, and the Society of Professional Journalists. Mr. Erdman has been published in various journals and periodicals for work he completed as a research specialist at IDPH, Northwestern University, and the Edward Hines Jr. Veterans Administration Hospital.



Breakout Session Presenters



Sofia Fernandez

Triage Cancer

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Disease Prevention and Health Promotion** 

Biography

Sofia Fernandez is a Staff Attorney at Triage Cancer, a national nonprofit that provides free education on the legal and practical issues that may impact individuals diagnosed with cancer and their caregivers. Her work includes developing educational materials, presenting programs on health-related legal issues, and speaking with individuals about navigating complex systems related to health insurance, employment, and disability insurance.

She is a frequent presenter for Triage Cancer's webinar series and has spoken for numerous cancer support organizations. As a Spanish speaker, Sofia also assists in creating Spanish-language educational materials and speaking at various internal and external Spanish-language events.

In addition to her legal education work, Sofia leads Triage Cancer's policy and legislative advocacy initiatives. These initiatives allow Triage Cancer to advocate on behalf of individuals impacted by cancer to improve the support available to them. Sofia holds a Juris Doctor from DePaul College of Law in Chicago. She also earned a Master of Public Health and a Bachelor of Science in Public Health from the University of South Florida. She is admitted to practice law in the state of Illinois.



Breakout Session Presenters



Hale Forster, PhD
Limetree

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Disease Prevention and Health Promotion** 

Biography

Dr. Hale Forster is Vice President of Behavioral Science & Insights at Limetree. She has 15 years of experience applying behavioral science to change behavior. Marrying academic knowledge with industry and applied industry expertise, she has worked with dozens of clients in healthcare and beyond to understand members and design communications, marketing, products, and interventions that support positive behavior change. Hale received her PhD in Psychology from Columbia University, where she studied judgment and decision-making. She is the past President of the Society for Environmental, Conservation, and Population Psychology.



Breakout Session Presenters



Becky Gabany

ChangeBridge Consulting

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Behavioral Health and Wellness**



Biography

Becky Gabany is the Founder of ChangeBridge Consulting, whose mission is to fill critical gaps... empowering organizations across the country to lead with greater equity, efficiency, and effectiveness. She is a Healing Ambassador grounded in Restorative Justice approaches, a Level 1 Trauma-Informed Practitioner, a Certified Diversity Professional and Executive through the Institute for Diversity Certification, and a Certified Professional in Clinical Health Equity. A first generation college student, Becky holds a Bachelor's degree in Communications and a Master's degree in Human Services.

Becky is a 2025–2026 Obama Leaders USA cohort member, a 40 Under 40 honoree, and a former member of the Forefront Illinois Racial Equity Cohort and U.S. Rise to Health Coalition. She serves as co-chair of the DEIJ Committee for the National Association for Community and Restorative Justice and as a board member of NAMI–Illinois. A sought-after speaker and consultant, she has supported national and statewide initiatives with organizations including RUSH University, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and is currently helping expand the Community Health Worker workforce across Illinois.



Breakout Session Presenters



Sana Kausar Habiya

University of Illinois Chicago

Presentation Day(s)

- **Thursday, September 3, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Behavioral Health and Wellness** 

Biography

Sana is a physician and a PhD candidate in Epidemiology at the University of Illinois Chicago. She has over three years of experience in designing health promotion programs and conducting behavioral health research.

With a clinical background and experience as an Emergency Medical Officer in Mumbai, Sana brings a strong patient-centered and evidence-based approach to public health. Her work focuses on developing and evaluating interventions that improve health outcomes among college and underserved populations.

She has led and contributed to multiple research projects on sleep health, substance use, and behavioral interventions, including studies examining the effectiveness of structured study techniques and lifestyle-based approaches to reduce stress and burnout. Her expertise includes survey design, IRB protocol development, and mixed-methods data analysis.

Sana's research interests center on health inequities, particularly among neurodiverse populations. She is committed to advancing equitable access to healthcare through rigorous research, leadership, and community engagement.



Breakout Session Presenters



Tamara Hamlish, PhD

University of Illinois Chicago

Presentation Day(s)

- **Thursday, September 3, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Lifting Up the CHW Workforce**



Biography

Tamara Hamlish, PhD is a medical anthropologist and Research Assistant Professor in the Department of Medicine, Division of Academic Internal Medicine and Palliative Care at the University of Illinois Chicago. She has more than 20 years of experience conducting research on patients' experience of chronic disease and building healthcare workforce capacity in community settings.

Her research uses ethnography and participatory design to gain insights into systemic and structural barriers to health. As Director of the Community Core for the NIH-funded Maternal Health Research Center of Excellence at UIC and PI of a 10-year CDC-funded project to enhance support for women diagnosed with breast cancer before 45 years old, her work is focused on building robust clinical-community coalitions to bridge gaps in services and care.

She established the Breast Cancer Survivorship Navigator Virtual Learning Collaborative (VLC) in 2020 to build capacity for community-based cancer support. The VLC brings together cancer survivorship experts and CHWs with deep local knowledge to deliver best practice care. Prior to her work at UIC, she was co-founder and Executive Director of ECHO-Chicago at the University of Chicago, a case-based telementoring platform to build primary care capacity to treat common chronic diseases in underserved communities.



Breakout Session Presenters



Paige Hardy

University of Illinois Chicago

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Disease Prevention and Health Promotion** 

Biography

Paige Hardy, MPH serves as the research coordinator for the Pappalardo Lab at the University of Illinois Chicago. Her research interests include stock inhaler programming, community engagement, ArcGIS mapping, and mixed-methods research.



Breakout Session Presenters



Alizah Harper, MPH, CHES

University of Illinois Extension

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Emerging Issues and Hot Topics**



Biography

Alizah Harper, MPH, CHES is a Visiting Extension Outreach Associate and former SNAP-Education Educator with University of Illinois Extension. She leads and supports policy, systems, and environmental initiatives that advance health equity, improve nutrition security, and strengthen community wellness. She holds a Master of Public Health from Indiana University, along with a Bachelor of Science in Biology and an Associate of Arts in Chemistry from Indiana University Southeast. As a Certified Health Education Specialist, she brings expertise in evidence-based education, collaborative engagement, and sustainable community health approaches.



Breakout Session Presenters



Amanda Harvey, PhD
Eastern Illinois University

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**
- **Thursday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Behavioral Health and Wellness** 
- **Operationalizing Public Health** 

Biography

Amanda Harvey is a faculty member and Academic Advisor in the Department of Public Health and Nutrition at Eastern Illinois University (EIU). She earned two bachelor's degrees from EIU—a Bachelor of Science in Health Studies and a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology—before completing a Master of Science in Family and Consumer Sciences. In 2025, she earned her Doctorate in Health Sciences from A.T. Still University.

Dr. Harvey's research focuses on women's health and miscarriage support systems, bystander intervention, health promotion and communication, and sexual health. She is particularly interested in how individuals and communities engage with health-related information and strategies that promote positive health behaviors.

At EIU, Dr. Harvey teaches a variety of courses, including Research Methods, Women's Health, Human Health, Community Health, Health Program Planning, and Motivational Interviewing. As an advisor and honors coordinator, she supports student success and enjoys seeing students find their career path.

Dr. Harvey is a Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES) and a trained Mental Health First Aid instructor. She is passionate about equipping students with the skills to promote health, address disparities, and support well-being in diverse communities.



Breakout Session Presenters



Nikki Hillier, PhD

Eastern Illinois University

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**
- **Thursday, September 3, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Behavioral Health and Wellness**



- **Operationalizing Public Health**



Biography

Dr. Nikki Hillier is a Professor in the Department of Public Health and Nutrition at Eastern Illinois University. She has been with EIU since 2015 where she is the Internship Coordinator and Graduate Coordinator. She studied Community Health and Public Health at the University of Illinois, Urbana. She has worked with a diversity of people in practice as a Program Coordinator at the Champaign-Urbana Public Health District, where she was employed for over 10 years. She teaches research methods and health administration. Her interests are in promoting growth in the public health workforce and helping students discover where they fit in with the public health system.



Breakout Session Presenters



Claire Hughes, MSW, LSW, LCSW
Illinois Public Health Association

Presentation Day(s)

- **Thursday, September 3, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Disease Prevention and Health Promotion** 

Biography

Claire Hughes is a licensed social worker and accomplished public health instructor with over a decade of hands-on experience as a Community Health Worker (CHW). She holds a Master's of Social Work from Southern Illinois University Carbondale and completed specialized fellowship training in trauma-informed behavioral health through SIU School of Medicine.

Currently pursuing a doctorate in Population Health, Claire's research focuses on CHW workforce development. As an instructor and consultant with extensive expertise in CHW integration strategies, she has collaborated with agencies, clinics, health departments, and universities at both state and national levels. Claire is also a frequent presenter on trauma-informed care and policies, where she shares her knowledge to influence both practice and policy development.

Claire serves on the workforce development committee of the National Association of Community Health Workers (NACHW), sits on the board of the Illinois Rural Health Association, and co-chairs the Jackson County (IL) Healthy Living Coalition.

A lifelong resident of Southern Illinois, Claire is deeply committed to her community. She takes great pride in representing the region she calls home, balancing her professional endeavors with her roles as a dedicated partner and parent.



Breakout Session Presenters



Emily Inman, MPH

Illinois Public Health Association

Presentation Day(s)

- **Thursday, September 3, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Disease Prevention and Health Promotion** 

Biography

Emily received her MPH from the University of Iowa College of Public Health in Community & Behavioral Health and Health Communication, with a concentration in Cultural Competency in Healthcare and Person-Centered Health Communication. She is a recipient of the Milford E. Barnes Award for Community & Behavioral Health. Emily is a 3rd generation CHW and learned to do this work at the age of 10 with her mother who recruited hundreds of minorities to become blood and bone marrow donors.

Emily is a program manager with IPHA and has managed or co- managed 10 grants over the last 3 and a half years, totaling over 13 million dollars. Highlights include COVID-19 Community-Based Education and Outreach; COVID Health Promotion and Outreach for Health Equity in Refugee, Immigrant, and Migrant Populations; Firearm Safe Storage Strategies; and IDOT Youth Cannabis Driving Prevention. Emily serves as the outreach, engagement, and equity liaison for IPHA's CHW training programs. Her work focuses on health inequities in vulnerable populations using CHWs with lived experience as an intervention modality. She brings a health equity lens to IPHA's commitment to community health, specializing in DEIA, lived experience, cultural humility, person-centeredness, trust-building, and the moral consciousness of health equity.



Breakout Session Presenters



Aimee Janssen-Robinson, PhD
Eastern Illinois University

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**
- **Thursday, September 3, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Behavioral Health and Wellness** 
- **Operationalizing Public Health** 

Biography

Dr. Robinson is a faculty member within the Department of Public Health and Nutrition at Eastern Illinois University. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Community Health Education from Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Additionally, she earned both her Master of Science and Doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction from Indiana State University. She has held CHES certification since 2006. Dr. Robinson demonstrates a commitment to professional engagement through her active participation in the American College Health Association and the Illinois Public Health Association. Her research interests include bystander intervention, well-being in academic environments, and curriculum and instruction. Furthermore, she serves as a dedicated 4-H leader in Marshall, IL.



Breakout Session Presenters



Donald Kauerauf

Illinois Public Health Association

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Operationalizing Public Health**



Biography

Donald Kauerauf recently joined the IPHA team after working for nearly 40 years in the public and private sectors. Most recently, he was a public health and state government policy advisor to Deloitte. He has spent his career keeping people safe, serving as the Director of the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, and Assistant Director of the Illinois Department of Public Health, and leading key public health and safety teams in Illinois. Over the years, Donald has teamed up with national groups like the CDC and FEMA to build community preparedness programs. He is passionate about public service, healthcare, and helping teams work together to get things done.



Breakout Session Presenters



Haley Klitzing, PhD

Illinois Department of Public Health

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Operationalizing Public Health**



Biography

Haley Klitzing is a Statistical Research Specialist at the Illinois Department of Public Health, where she supports analysis and reporting for statewide surveys, including the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) and the Healthy Illinois Survey. Since joining the department in December 2024, she has brought a strong research background and analytical perspective to her work in public health.

Haley holds a PhD in Chemistry from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a BS in Chemistry from Quincy University. She enjoys applying her research skills in a new context and contributing to data-driven insights that support public health programs and decision-making.



Breakout Session Presenters



Andrew Lerch

Illinois Department of Public Health

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Emerging Issues and Hot Topics**



Biography

As the lead for the Illinois Department of Public Health Men's Health Section, Andrew Lerch manages a variety of program functions, including raising awareness of health issues and outcome disparities among boys and men, identifying needs, recommending policy developments, and administering programming services to benefit men's health. Notable program highlights include the annual publication of the Illinois Men's Health Assessment, maintaining an updated men's health webpage with helpful information and resources, and collaborating with a growing number of Illinois groups and organizations to integrate a male-focused approach on topics like mental health, chronic disease, and violence and injury prevention.

With a professional background in health care and a Doctor of Physical Therapy degree, Andrew is passionate about encouraging healthy lifestyle behaviors, promoting evidence-based decision making, and advocating for services to those most in need.



Breakout Session Presenters



Kaitlyn Macias
HAP Foundation

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Behavioral Health and Wellness**



Biography

Kaitlyn Macias (she/her) is a Community Health Worker with the HAP Foundation. The mission of HAP is to advance access to serious illness care through education, research, advocacy, and workforce development.

Kaitlyn lives and serves the West Cook County suburbs. As a CHW in serious illness, she enjoys giving her community education on how to live with grief and aims to normalize grief. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Criminology at Dominican University in 2023. Kaitlyn is currently in school to earn her Master's in Social Work with a concentration in Health and Well-Being, and hopes to continue advocating for access to equitable health care resources for underserved communities.



Breakout Session Presenters



Jeri Mack

UI Health UIC-OCEAN-HP

Presentation Day(s)

- **Thursday, September 3, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Lifting Up the CHW Workforce** 

Biography

An innovative public health leader with more than 20 years of experience, Jeri Mack has dedicated her career to advancing health education and promotion, community health, health equity, advocacy, and engagement-driven research. She is the founder of Humble Heart Linkage Services and co-founder of S.M.I.L.E, a caregiver support group.

She brings expertise in program development and management, workforce development and training, coalition building, and grant coordination—each grounded in a commitment to equity and access. Jeri is recognized as a strategic leader and change agent, known for her ability to design and implement impactful programs that improve health outcomes and strengthen communities. She creates practical, community-driven solutions that advance dignity, trust, and equity, breaking down systemic barriers for lasting impact. She is highly skilled in building and sustaining collaborative partnerships across healthcare systems and community-based organizations. She is highly regarded for fostering partnerships that empower rather than simply serve communities.

She has a passion for connecting people, systems, and resources, Jeri continues to lead initiatives that foster innovation, and drive meaningful, lasting change in public health.



Breakout Session Presenters



Olidia Montoya

Cass County Health Department

Presentation Day(s)

- **Thursday, September 3, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Lifting Up the CHW Workforce**



Biography

Olidia Montoya is a dedicated Community Health Worker at the Cass County Health Department (CCHD), where she serves as the department's primary Health Insurance Navigator and a leader in community outreach and engagement. In this role, she supports individuals and families in accessing essential services, including insurance enrollment, housing resources, and food assistance, helping expand equitable access to care across the community.

As a bilingual professional, fluent in Spanish, Olidia is a trusted and influential voice, providing culturally responsive support and building strong relationships with diverse populations throughout Cass County. She plays a critical role in bridging gaps between underserved communities and the healthcare system, particularly among immigrant and rural populations.

Olidia leads efforts to improve access to care by guiding individuals through Medicaid and Get Covered Illinois enrollment, assisting with renewals, and ensuring continuity of coverage. She also serves as the department's lead for IBCCP enrollment and navigation, helping women access vital breast and cervical cancer screening services. Through her leadership and strong community partnerships, she addresses social determinants of health, empowers individuals to make informed decisions, and advances sustainable, community-driven solutions that improve health outcomes.



Breakout Session Presenters



Ellen Nieman
Wellness House

Presentation Day(s)

- **Thursday, September 3, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Behavioral Health and Wellness**



Biography

In her role as Associate Director of Programs at Wellness House, Ellen supports the planning and implementation of programs, along with participant and community engagement efforts to ensure awareness and access to programs. Ellen also supports the organization's program evaluation process to help maintain high-quality programs and processes for all participants.

Ellen joined the Wellness House team in 2016. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Social Work degree from Saint Louis University, and Master of Social Work and Master of Arts in Pastoral Ministry degrees from Boston College. She is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and a member of the National Association of Social Workers. Throughout her time at Wellness House, Ellen has facilitated a variety of cancer support and bereavement groups, as well as survivorship programming.

Guided by her belief in caring for the whole person to promote healing and resilience, Ellen is deeply grateful to work in a community where compassionate, holistic care is central to the mission.



Breakout Session Presenters



Sarahjini Nunn

Illinois Department of Public Health

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Lifting Up the CHW Workforce**



Biography

Sarahjini Nunn is a native of East St Louis, IL and possesses a passion public service. She has spent the totality of her 30-year career working for the public sector in various capacities including 25 years with the State of Illinois serving in advocacy roles such as Benefits Specialist and SSI Advocacy Services Manager for the DHS Division of Rehabilitation Services. She has also served as Head Start/Early Head Start Director for the Springfield Urban League where she focused on early learning and development, health and family wellbeing. Most recently she served as Contract Administrator for the Illinois Department of Transportation where she was responsible for ensuring that minorities, women and disabled contractors had the opportunity to access contracts utilizing federal dollars. Sarahjini currently serves on various community organizations and boards where she advocates for education, economic development and health related issues. She holds a Bachelor of Business Administration, MPA, MBA and a Doctor of Education in Interdisciplinary Leadership. She is a certified trainer and community educator.



Breakout Session Presenters



Tobiloba Olatokun, MD

University of Illinois Springfield

Presentation Day(s)

- **Thursday, September 3, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Emerging Issues and Hot Topics**



Biography

Dr. Tobiloba Philip Olatokun is a physician and researcher whose work focuses on the application of artificial intelligence to clinical decision-making, predictive analytics, and population health improvement. His interests include the responsible use of emerging technologies to strengthen diagnosis, disease monitoring, and healthcare system performance. He has experience in clinical research and community-based health initiatives, including participation in the WHO ACTION trial during his internship. Drawing on both clinical training and research experience, Dr. Olatokun brings an interdisciplinary perspective that connects medicine, data science, and public health practice.



Breakout Session Presenters



Susan Olivo-Marston, PhD

Southern Illinois University School of Medicine

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Operationalizing Public Health** 

Biography

Dr. Susan Olivo-Marston is currently an Associate Professor in the Department of Medical Microbiology, Immunology and Cell Biology at Southern Illinois University (SIU) School of Medicine and the Director of Cancer Epidemiology at the Simmons Cancer Institute at SIU. Prior to SIU, Dr. Olivo-Marston was a faculty member in the Division of Epidemiology in the College of Public Health at The Ohio State University and a member of the OSUCCC Cancer Control Program from 2009-2021. Previously, she was a postdoctoral fellow in the National Cancer Institute's Cancer Prevention Fellowship Program during which she earned a Master's of Public Health concentrating in Epidemiology and Biostatistics at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Dr. Olivo-Marston earned a PhD in Tumor Biology from Georgetown University in 2004 and a Master's of Science in Cancer Biology from the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in 2001. Dr. Olivo-Marston has used animal models of cancer and human studies to examine how childhood exposures affect adult cancer risk. Currently, Dr. Olivo-Marston's research is focused cancer disparities and specifically on: 1) epidemiological studies examining cancer risk among firefighters and 2) methods to improve lung cancer and colon cancer screening in the underserved populations.



Breakout Session Presenters



Andrea Pappalardo-Wlochowicz

University of Illinois Chicago

Presentation Day(s)

- **Thursday, September 3, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Disease Prevention and Health Promotion** 

Biography

Dr. Pappalardo Wlochowicz is an Associate Professor of Medicine and Pediatrics at University of Illinois Chicago. She is board certified in internal medicine, pediatrics, and allergy/immunology, and serves as the Allergy Service Director for the UIC Department of Medicine. Dr. Pappalardo's research focuses on school and community-engaged implementation science-driven interventions to reduce health disparities in asthma and food allergy. Her work in stock inhaler legislation and programming is appreciated throughout Chicago, across Illinois, and nationally. Dr. Pappalardo melds system-level thinking with her analytic skills gained in research and clinical expertise to create innovative solutions to healthcare system problems using community-engaged implementation science methodologies.



Breakout Session Presenters



Anna Pinsoneault

University of Illinois System

Presentation Day(s)

- **Thursday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Operationalizing Public Health**



Biography

Anna Pinsoneault is a public health leader focused on turning multi-partner initiatives into practical on the ground action. She currently serves as Director of Public Health and Research Partnerships for the University of Illinois System's Office of Strategic Initiatives, where she works closely with state agencies and academic partners to advance statewide public health efforts. In her role, Anna specializes in bridging strategy and implementation, bringing together diverse stakeholders, coordinating multidisciplinary teams, and ensuring programs are positioned to move from planning to execution.

Anna previously held leadership roles with SHIELD Illinois during the COVID-19 response, where she supported statewide testing operations, rapid program implementation, and the development of guidance in partnership with state and local health departments.

Anna brings a practical, implementation-focused perspective to her work and is committed to strengthening partnerships that support resilient and equitable public health systems in Illinois.



Breakout Session Presenters



Madeline Quasebarth, DrPH, MA
Planned Parenthood of Illinois

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Emerging Issues and Hot Topics**



Biography

Madeline Quasebarth is a public health researcher and Director of Research at Planned Parenthood of Illinois, where she leads a portfolio of mixed-methods research and evaluation projects focused on sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and access to care. Her work centers community-engaged research approaches, integrating patient voices into study design, implementation, and interpretation to advance equitable, evidence-based care. She has led multiple studies on abortion access, contraceptive equity, and patient experiences, and currently oversees organized evaluation frameworks that inform service delivery and policy.



Breakout Session Presenters



Megan Reutter, DHSc, RDH
Illinois Oral Health Coalition

Presentation Day(s)

- **Thursday, September 3, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Disease Prevention and Health Promotion** 

Biography

Megan Reutter, DHSc, RDH, has dedicated the last 14 years to improving oral health, beginning as a clinical hygienist in her rural community. Her professional growth led her to a broader calling to address systemic access to oral health services at a higher level. Currently, Dr. Reutter serves as the Executive Director of the Illinois Oral Health Coalition, where she drives initiatives to improve oral health outcomes for residents across Illinois. She is also an adjunct faculty member at Parkland College. Dr. Reutter's expertise includes interprofessional collaboration and rural health. She furthers her advocacy work for medical-dental integration as a board member of the National Network of Healthcare Hygienists.



Breakout Session Presenters



Leticia Reyes-Nash

Health Management Associate

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Lifting Up the CHW Workforce**



Biography

Leticia is a policy advocacy and community engagement leader focused on health equity and justice. Her extensive leadership experience includes Cook County Health system, IL Dept. of Public Health, and grassroots and community organizing.



Breakout Session Presenters



Misty Rhoads, Ph.D., CZB, MBSR
Eastern Illinois University

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**
- **Thursday, September 3, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Behavioral Health and Wellness**
- **Operationalizing Public Health**



Biography

Misty Rhoads, Ph.D., CZB, MBSR, is a Full Professor of Public Health at Eastern Illinois University with more than twenty years of experience in health and education. A contemplative researcher and somatic practitioner, her work advances whole-person wellness at the intersection of education, health, and nervous system awareness. She teaches Mind–Body Medicine, Mindfulness and Stress Reduction, Research Methods and Statistics, Women’s Health, Epidemiology, and Health Disparities of Gender and Sexually Diverse Populations, weaving together rigorous public health training with embodied and trauma-informed approaches. As faculty with the Zero Balancing Health Association, she integrates nervous system regulation and transformative touch into both scholarship and practice. Dr. Rhoads has published research on the power of safe, therapeutic touch and embodied regulation to foster resilience and healing. She founded the Mindfulness Initiative at EIU to expand access to practices that strengthen focus, emotional regulation, resilience, and community well-being.



Breakout Session Presenters



Arlene Ryndak, MPH, BSN, RN

Grandparents for Vaccine
Association of Public Health Nurses

Presentation Day(s)

- **Thursday, September 3, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Emerging Issues and Hot Topics**



Biography

Arlene Ryndak is a public health nurse and longtime advocate for policies that strengthen community health. She began her career in legislative and regulatory settings, developing a strong understanding of how policy shapes health outcomes.

Throughout her career, Arlene has focused on harm and risk prevention and health promotion. She is especially passionate about equipping nurses with advocacy tools and confidence to influence the influential.

Now semi-retired, she serves her community as a substitute school nurse and remains active in professional leadership. She is co-chair of the Association of Public Health Nurses' Public Health Policy Committee, liaison to the Nursing Community Coalition, and a Member Director of the Illinois Alliance for Nursing Education, a Mutual Interest Group with the American Nurses Association-Illinois.

Arlene is an Illinois State Lead for Grandparents for Vaccines, a grassroots initiative using storytelling to address vaccine hesitancy, elevating the voices of older adults who have witnessed life before and after vaccines.

Across her work in professional nursing organizations, she uses the Public Health Policy Advocacy Toolkit to support skill building and confidence. In her own practice, Arlene brings these approaches together—pairing storytelling with structured advocacy—to encourage shifts in perspective and behavior, and influence policy.



Breakout Session Presenters



Samantha Saini

Illinois Department of Public Health

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Operationalizing Public Health** 

Biography

Samantha (Sam) Saini is a public health surveillance leader at the Illinois Department of Public Health, where she serves as the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) Coordinator. She oversees statewide survey operations and data systems supporting population health monitoring across Illinois. Sam leads large-scale survey initiatives, including the development of the Healthy Illinois Survey, a 50,000+ annual sample designed to provide county and sub-county level data to inform public health programs and policy.

She has worked across all levels of public health, including county health departments in New Jersey, state agencies in New York and Illinois, federal work with the HIV/AIDS Bureau, and international work with CDC/WHO in India supporting polio eradication efforts.

Her research interests vary as much as BRFSS does. Outside of work, she can usually be found doom-scrolling videos of dogs and family pranks, or painting in her basement.



Breakout Session Presenters



Margaret Saltysiak, DrPH, IBCLC, CHES
Naperville Lactation

Presentation Day(s)

- **Thursday, September 3, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Operationalizing Public Health**



Biography

Margaret Saltysiak, DrPH, IBCLC, CHES, is a lactation consultant, public health leader, educator, and business owner focused on advancing maternal and child health through systems-level change. She is the owner of Naperville Lactation, where she provides clinical care to families, and she teaches future lactation professionals as a Pathway 2 instructor through UC San Diego Extended Studies.

Margaret's work bridges clinical practice, public health, and policy. In collaboration with the Illinois Public Health Association, she has contributed to statewide efforts to implement Medicaid coverage for lactation services by developing provider training, enrollment and billing resources, and policy guidance aimed at improving access to care. Her work centers on reducing disparities in breastfeeding outcomes by strengthening the lactation workforce and expanding access for underserved populations.

She is also the creator of multiple educational platforms and tools for lactation professionals, including exam preparation programs, clinical resources, and digital health solutions. As a mother of five, Margaret brings both professional expertise and lived experience to her work, with a focus on making evidence-based care accessible, equitable, and practical.



Breakout Session Presenters



Jameika A. Sampson, MPH, MBA

Planned Parenthood of Illinois

Presentation Day(s)

- **Thursday, September 3, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Emerging Issues and Hot Topics**



Biography

Jameika A. Sampson is the Senior Director of Community Health & Equity at Planned Parenthood of Illinois. She is dedicated to amplifying the voices of communities who have had to show resilience in the face of oppression and disenfranchisement, keeping their experiences in focus during the evolution of public health. Jameika earned her bachelor's degree from North Carolina A&T State University, a Master's Public Health from Florida A&M University, and a Master's Business Administration from Wright State University.

Led by her assertion that everyone deserves affordable, culturally competent health care, Jameika centers people, not disease. Partnering with community stakeholders on systemic and environmental change efforts, Jameika works to identify and expel health disparities to bring equity to our public health system. She has built multi-sector coalitions to support programs and policies that protect youth from tobacco use and advised hospital leadership on improved health equity and community engagement strategies through a proposed merger.



Breakout Session Presenters



Gregory Scott

Carle Health System

Presentation Day(s)

- **Thursday, September 3, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Lifting Up the CHW Workforce** 

Biography

Greg Scott has the privilege and honor to serve as the Community Wellness & Faith Community Health Services Manager at Carle Health system. Greg has been with Carle Health system for over 17 years. Greg has been an actively licensed Paramedic for over 37 years and an actively licensed RN for over 31 years. Greg holds undergraduate degrees in Nursing and Business, a graduate degree in Public Safety Administration, and has completed some coursework toward a Doctorate in Business Administration. Greg completed a Health Minister certificate through the Wesley Theological Seminary. Greg also holds many specialty certifications in addition to being a Rural Health Nurse, Faith Community Nurse, Faith Community Nurse Program Educator/Coordinator, Mental Health First Aid-Adult Instructor, ACLS Instructor, ITLS Instructor, PALS Instructor, and Respecting Choices Advanced Care Planning Facilitator/Instructor.

Greg is blessed to build collaborative relationships with community organizations. Greg has a personal interest in helping individuals be empowered to manage their health conditions and helping provide navigation assistance through the healthcare system. He has a personal drive and passion to help others to be better educated and equipped to make informed decisions while knowing what questions to ask their healthcare providers.



Breakout Session Presenters



Jennifer Sherry, RDH, EdD

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

Presentation Day(s)

- **Thursday, September 3, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Disease Prevention and Health Promotion** 

Biography

Jennifer S. Sherry, RDH, EdD, is a Professor in the Dental Hygiene Program at Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC). She was a clinician for over 11 years and has been a dental hygiene educator for over 25 years. Her research interests include oral health access to care, Social Determinants of Health (SDOH), and a myriad of clinical and radiographic case studies. She has published in peer-reviewed journals and continues to be an advocate for the underserved in southern Illinois, where she began the "Give Adults a Smile Day" program at SIUC. She has a true servant's heart and has helped with many initiatives across SIU's campus, in her community, and continues to be an advocate for students, faculty, and patients.



Breakout Session Presenters



Shameka Simon

West Side Wellness Chicago, LLC

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Lifting Up the CHW Workforce**



Biography

Shameka Simon is a community health educator, Diabetes Prevention Lifestyle Coach, and certified Mental Health First Aider dedicated to advancing health equity on the West Side of Chicago and surrounding communities. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Magazine Journalism and certifications in chronic disease education, maternal health, motivational interviewing, and the social determinants of health. With over 15 years of experience in the medical field and nine years in community health, Shameka has facilitated wellness workshops at health fairs, community centers, and local organizations—connecting residents to resources that enhance quality of life. As a public health professional, Shameka is passionate about strengthening the Community Health Worker (CHW) workforce through skill-building, mentorship, and innovative approaches to community engagement. Her work centers on bridging the gap between healthcare systems and communities by equipping CHWs with practical tools to support behavior change, navigate complex systems, and build trust with clients. She is currently developing the Chicago Community Health Collective, a non-profit designed to provide peer coaching, professional development, and leadership opportunities for CHWs and public health professionals.



Breakout Session Presenters



Tracey Smith, DNP, PHCS-BC, MS
Illinois Public Health Association

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**
- **Thursday, September 3, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Lifting Up the CHW Workforce**



Biography

Tracey Smith is the Associate Executive Director for Public Health Practice at the Illinois Public Health Association and Director of the IPHA CHW Capacity Building Center. She holds a Doctor of Nursing Practice focused on health literacy and a master's degree in community health nursing with a minor in multicultural nursing.

With more than 30 years of experience in healthcare, Tracey has served as a clinician at a Federally Qualified Health Center for over 22 years, an Associate Professor, a CHW for 12 years, and a CHW program developer for more than a decade. Her lived experience growing up in a rural Illinois community without health insurance deeply informs her commitment to closing gaps in care.

Tracey has led statewide initiatives integrating CHWs into healthcare, public health, education, and community-based systems, helping secure more than \$100 million in grant funding to advance the CHW profession in Illinois. She helped develop one of the first CHW training programs in downstate Illinois and has presented nationally on CHW training and sustainability. Since joining IPHA, she has led the CHW 101 program, training more than 1,200 CHWs, developed the IPHA CHW Capacity Building Center, and now leads the HelpGuideThrive Operations HUB.



Breakout Session Presenters



Kaitlyn Streitmatter

University of Illinois Extension

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Emerging Issues and Hot Topics** 

Biography

Kaitlyn Streitmatter serves as Senior Manager of Policy, Systems and Environment for Illinois SNAP-Education. In this role, she provides strategic PSE direction, fosters statewide PSE partnerships, and supports PSE team members with the implementation of PSE initiatives across communities and coalitions in Illinois. Kaitlyn holds a Master of Public Health and a Master of Kinesiology. Prior to her current position, she served as an SNAP-Ed Extension PSE Educator in central Illinois, where she gained valuable experience in the field of public health and nutrition education.



Breakout Session Presenters



Rachael Telleen
The HAP Foundation

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Lifting Up the CHW Workforce** 

Biography

Rachael Telleen brings nearly 30 years of experience in nonprofit healthcare, grounded in the belief that knowledge empowers individuals to access, navigate, and advocate for care. Her work focuses on developing educational programs, advancing community health initiatives, and strengthening the workforce through sustainable training efforts.

In 2023, Rachael launched and registered Illinois' most successful Community Health Worker (CHW) Apprenticeship Program, an innovative workforce initiative that equips participants with the skills and credentials needed to serve as trusted health advocates while addressing critical workforce shortages. Through a federal AmeriCorps grant, she also leads the Seniors Workforce Program, training adults aged 55 and older to become CHWs while promoting lifelong learning, civic engagement, and intergenerational impact that enhances community health.

Rachael is a key member of the Help.Guide.Thrive. Operations Hub, supporting the development of statewide infrastructure to build sustainability for CHW and doula services. She is known for building strong community partnerships and driving systems change, including her leadership in the statewide dissemination of the POLST (Practitioner Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment) form in Illinois. Rachael believes that community outreach and strategic partnerships are the foundation of successful programs.



Breakout Session Presenters



Anushree Tiwari

Illinois Department of Public Health

Presentation Day(s)

- **Thursday, September 3, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Disease Prevention and Health Promotion** 

Biography

Anushree Tiwari is the Chief of the Oral Health Section at the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and a Dental Public Health professional with extensive experience in dentistry, public health, and research. She previously served as both a resident and a fellow with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), where her work focused on improving the integration of oral health within primary care settings and advancing preventive oral health strategies for young children, as well as addressing the oral health status of older adults with disabilities.

Her work focuses on access to preventive dental services, the utilization of oral health care during medical visits, and the implementation of minimally invasive approaches to oral health. Her recent work examines how routine preventive medical care can serve as an opportunity to deliver oral health interventions such as risk assessments, fluoride varnish application, and referrals to dental providers. She is committed to advancing health equity, improving oral health outcomes, and fostering partnerships between medical and dental communities.



Breakout Session Presenters



Ba Tung Tran

University of Illinois Springfield

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Operationalizing Public Health**



Biography

Ba Tung (Jackey) Tran is a Master of Public Health student at the University of Illinois Springfield and a Health Inspector with the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH). His work centers on public health inspection, regulatory compliance, and community health protection. With a background in Medical Imaging and Radiological Sciences and clinical training in Vietnam and Taiwan, he brings a strong interdisciplinary perspective to public health practice. His academic interests include epidemiology, biostatistics, health equity, and evidence-based approaches to population health improvement. Through his professional role and graduate training, he is committed to advancing prevention-focused and data-informed public health practice.



Breakout Session Presenters



Veronica Sanchez Villa

Equal Hope

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Lifting Up the CHW Workforce** 

Biography

Veronica Sanchez is a Community Health Worker at Equal Hope, going on five years this November, where she focuses on improving health equity and access to care for underserved populations in Lake County. She has extensive experience in community outreach, patient education, and coordinating preventive health programs, including cancer screenings and social determinants of health initiatives. Veronica has successfully led community health campaigns that increased screening rates, developed outreach strategies that engaged hundreds of residents. She is an active participant in collaborative public health projects, such as the CHW Learning Collaborative, and is passionate about empowering communities through health education and advocacy while mentoring the next generation of Community Health Workers.



Breakout Session Presenters



Anna Volerman

University of Chicago

Presentation Day(s)

- Wednesday, September 2, 2026
- Thursday, September 3, 2026

Track(s)

- Disease Prevention and Health Promotion 

Biography

Dr. Anna Volerman is an Associate Professor of Medicine and Pediatrics at the University of Chicago . She is a primary care physician for both children and adults as well as a health services researcher focused on applying implementation science and public policy to improve health and education outcomes.



Breakout Session Presenters



Patrobas Wafula

University of Illinois Extension

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Emerging Issues and Hot Topics**



Biography

Patrobas Wafula is a Visiting Extension Outreach Associate and a former SNAP-Education Extension Educator with the University of Illinois Extension. He delivered direct nutrition education and advanced policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) strategies to improve food access, strengthen community partnerships, and promote health equity across rural Illinois. He brings over fifteen years of public service experience spanning public administration, law, and community development. His work centers on advancing equitable systems through stakeholder engagement, capacity-building, and evidence-informed approaches. Prior to his current role, Patrobas served as a Commissioner at the Uganda Equal Opportunities Commission, contributing to quasi-judicial decision-making and national oversight of equity and inclusion.

Patrobas holds advanced degrees in Law, with a concentration in International and Comparative Law, and is currently pursuing a Doctorate in Public Administration at University of Illinois Springfield. His academic and professional interests focus on social equity, public policy, and strengthening community-centered systems.



Breakout Session Presenters



Dustin Wilson
Wellness House

Presentation Day(s)

- **Thursday, September 3, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Behavioral Health and Wellness**



Biography

Dustin Wilson is the Director of Community Impact at Wellness House, where he leads strategic partnerships to expand access to supportive oncology programs across Chicagoland. With nearly two decades of experience in healthcare, Dustin brings a unique blend of clinical and community expertise to his work. He began his career as an occupational therapy assistant before transitioning into roles in recruitment, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), and corporate social responsibility.

In his current role, Dustin focuses on building meaningful collaborations with healthcare systems, community organizations, and public health partners to increase awareness and utilization of psychosocial cancer support services. He is actively leading initiatives supported by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) to equip healthcare professionals with tools to better support cancer survivors and caregivers, with a focus on expanding access in underserved and rural communities.

Dustin is passionate about advancing equitable cancer care through community-engaged approaches, systems-level thinking, and sustainable program implementation. His work is grounded in a commitment to whole-person care, ensuring individuals impacted by cancer have access to the resources and support they need to thrive.



Breakout Session Presenters



Ashley Wolf, MD, MS

University of Chicago

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Disease Prevention and Health Promotion** 

Biography

Ashley Wolf is a pediatric critical care physician with an expertise in pediatric injury prevention and community partnered research. She completed pediatric residency at McGaw Medical Center of Northwestern University/ Ann & Robert H Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago where she became involved in advocacy. She then completed her critical care fellowship at Seattle Children's Hospital during which she also obtained an MS in Health Services at the University of Washington. She is the current co-Director of the Chicago Gun Violence Research Collaborative and leads several firearm injury prevention efforts. She lives and works in Chicago, IL where she is an Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Chicago Comer Children's Hospital.



Breakout Session Presenters



Kailee Zito

Kankakee County Health Department

Presentation Day(s)

- **Wednesday, September 2, 2026**

Track(s)

- **Operationalizing Public Health** 

Biography

Kailee Zito graduated from Olivet Nazarene University in 2023 with degrees in theology and sociology and is a Health Promotion Coordinator at the Kankakee County Health Department in Kankakee, Illinois. She leads the work in her community's IRIS network, Kankakee County's Illinois Tobacco Free Communities grant, and supports many other health department initiatives. The Kankakee County IRIS network has facilitated over 300 referrals and connected 200 families to services since its launch in February of 2024. She also participates in collaboratives addressing homelessness in Kankakee County, facilitating effective community outreach, and sits on her local Birth to 5 IL Region 32 action council.

In her free time, Kailee enjoys reading, crafting, and playing trumpet in local municipal bands. A northeast Ohio native, she grew up with a fascination about weather and the environment, both of which she remains passionate about today.



Contact Us!

For any questions about the presenters, please contact:

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