



IPHA 85TH ANNUAL PUBLIC HEALTH WORKFORCE CONFERENCE

Together We Thrive

**This year, help us celebrate 85
years of public health in Illinois!**



**Crowne Plaza
Springfield | Illinois**

SEPTEMBER 1-3 | 2026



2026

Together We Thrive

PRE-CONFERENCE

AGENDA

TUESDAY | SEPTEMBER 1 | PRE-CONFERENCE | DAY ONE

11:30 AM

REGISTRATION OPENS

12:00 PM - 2:00 PM

ROUND ONE - PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

ONE

Advanced Topics in Public Health Supervision: Addressing Challenging Conversations

Plaza A

Shelly Ebbert, Illinois Public Health Association

As public health practitioners and leaders, we advocate for underserved communities, promote social justice, and embrace diversity. While our aims are admirable and necessary, the reality is that our jobs can be challenging—especially when we face the differences of opinion inherent in bringing our goals together. This vital work becomes more difficult as science and truth become suspect and social media turns opinions into outrage. In this workshop, Shelly will help public health practitioners reflect on their stories and manage responses in difficult conversations. Using materials from the IPHA Supervisory Course and tools from the book “Crucial Conversations”, participants will learn strategies while “in the moment” of difficult conversations. By employing these tools in real-life scenarios, participants will be better equipped to improve their organizations’ results as well as their own health, relationships, and well-being.

TWO

From Outreach to Reimbursement: CHW Documentation for MCO Billing Success

Plaza B

Tracey Smith, Illinois Public Health Association | Tonya Potts, Egyptian Health Department | Payton Champley Langen, Christian County Health Department | Sarah Williams, Tazewell County Health Department

This interactive preconference workshop equips Community Health Workers (CHWs) with the essential skills to document services in ways that meet Managed Care Organization (MCO) requirements and support Medicaid billing. Participants will learn how to translate outreach, care coordination, and social needs support into clear, compliant, and outcome-focused documentation. Through real-world examples and hands-on practice, attendees will strengthen their ability to distinguish billable activities, avoid common documentation pitfalls, and align their notes with care plans, member goals, and MCO expectations. This session is designed for CHWs, supervisors, and program leaders preparing for or currently working within managed care and value-based environments.

Continued

THREE

Healthy Brains Start Here: Small Habits, Big Impact!

Plaza C

Krissy Roseberry, Illinois Public Health Association

What would change if brain health were part of everyday health conversations from the very beginning? This interactive session equips CHWs and public health professionals with practical tools to promote brain health across the lifespan. Through guided discussions, small-group activities, and real-world scenarios, participants will explore how everyday habits shape cognitive well-being from early life through older adulthood. The session will highlight key pillars, including sleep, mental stimulation, physical activity, nutrition, and management of chronic conditions, showing how small, achievable changes can lead to lasting impact. Participants will also be introduced to the Illinois Brain Health Project, highlighting its tools, resources, and partnership opportunities to advance brain health promotion across the state. Join us to learn how to support your own brain health while gaining tools to help others do the same.

2:00 PM – 2:30 PM

BREAK TIME

2:30 PM – 4:30 PM

ROUND TWO - PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

ONE

**Communication Skills for the Public Health
Community Workforce**

Plaza A

Allie Boman, Boman Communications, LLC

This workshop equips community health workers, local public health department team members, and other health professionals with practical communications skills they can apply immediately to their own projects. Grounded in both community engagement principles and communications best practices, it moves participants through the full arc of a mini communications strategy—from empathizing with their audience to executing across the right channels (including community organizations and media) with effective messaging and visuals.

TWO

**Foundations of Professional Excellence to Propel Your
Public Health Career**

Plaza B

Ranelle Brew and Diana Yassanye, Parasol Health Consulting

Stepping into the public health workforce means more than mastering technical skills; it means showing up with confidence, integrity, and the interpersonal savvy to make an impact. This two-hour interactive training equips public health students with the professional foundations essential for thriving in public health settings. Participants will explore the core components of professional behavior, sharpen their workplace communication skills, and learn to navigate ethical challenges with confidence. Through hands-on activities and real-world scenarios, students will walk away with practical tools for everything from writing professional emails to building meaningful networks, setting the stage for a credible, impactful public health career.

Continued

THREE

From Data to Impact: Advancing CMV Prevention, Surveillance, and Child Outcomes through Public Health Action

Plaza C

Emma Troth, Ginger Mullin, and Kathleen Jordan, Illinois Department of Public Health

Cytomegalovirus (CMV) is the most common congenital infection in the United States, yet awareness among healthcare providers, early interventionists, educators, and childcare professionals remains limited. The workshop will begin with foundational information on the definition of CMV, how the virus is transmitted, and key strategies to prevent exposure—particularly for individuals working closely with young children. Participants will explore incidence and prevalence data to understand CMV's public health significance and examine current research, including new findings on hearing outcomes, developmental impacts, and evolving treatment pathways. The workshop will also focus on supporting families after a CMV diagnosis, including guidance on early intervention referrals, family support, audiologic monitoring, and developmental considerations. Finally, the session will address the importance of reporting congenital CMV and CMV-related hearing loss to public health systems for improved long-term outcomes.

FOUR

Health Equity Think Tank: Health Advancement for Addressing Diverse Population Needs to Focus on the Whole Person

Plaza D

Debbie Bennett-Carrey, Celi Esquivel, Mike Mehta, Lakshmi Emory, and Kevin Sloss, Humana

In Illinois, we focus on the whole-person view that encompasses clinical, behavioral health, and spiritual impacts on how individuals and their families interact with their healthcare journey to yield the best health outcomes. The two-hour workshop is designed to build upon the day's presentations by facilitating the productive exchange of ideas among participants. It aims to foster innovative group discussions focused on best practices while encouraging the ongoing use of data to examine and enhance the continuum of care. This approach supports collaborative learning and the development of actionable strategies, consistent with recommended practices for data-driven improvement in healthcare environments. Community Health Workers (CHWs), clinicians, IPHA members, and other Public Health administrators are welcome to attend, along with other Managed Care Organizations (MCOs). We also encourage students attending the conference to join this dynamic session and connect with other attendees.

**Need a Map of
the Crowne Plaza?**

Check the last page of this agenda!





IPHA Poster Presentations

DAY TWO | DAY THREE

Pre-Function Area

Addressing the Loneliness Epidemic: Social Connections as a Cardiovascular Health Strategy in Illinois

Randall Kaw | Brian Chen

Assessing Public Response to Stroke-Like Symptoms: A Questionnaire-Based Survey

Michael Suntrup

Barriers to Maternal Healthcare in Rural Illinois: A Provider Perspective

Hunter Kienast | Gianna Sagona

Bridging Gaps in Care: Youth Perspectives on Mental Health, Substance Use and Digital Support

Lucia Vidal | Amy Johnson

Developing a Collaborative Care Framework for GLP-1 Management in Geriatric Populations

Gavin Kocher | Swateja Nimkar

Engaging Youth Across Southern Illinois' 16 Counties in Community Change Through Policy and Civic Action

**Ujuonu Kamanu | Francis Kazungu | Gail Devito
Scott Hays | Christine Dannhausen
Manorama Khare**

Get it Together: We Thrive in Building Public Trust Through Cooperative AI Surveillance

John Kirchesner | Brian Chen

High-Fat Diet, Obesity, and Neuroinflammation: Brain Health in Special Populations

Angela McComas | Brian Chen | Shelly Tischkau

Multilevel Structural Determinants of Childhood Lead Exposure and Prevention Policy Gaps

Mercedes Dick | Brian Chen

"No one wants that 1 out of a million death to be their kid": A Qualitative Analysis of Protective Individualism, Institutional Distrust, and the Shifting Epistemology of Vaccination in Today's Digital Discourse

Stacey Kim

Out of Reach: LGBTQ+ Health and Social Needs in a Midwestern Service Desert

Dhara Patel

Sex Difference in the Association Between Serious Psychological Distress and Substance Use Among U.S. Young Adults Aged 18-29

Stephanie Avi | Brian Chen

Teach Us What We Need to Know: Student Voices on AI Skills for Public Health Workforce Readiness

Kaitlin Coniglio | Brian Chen

The Role of the Pomodoro Technique and Virtual Study Halls: Reducing Stress and Preventing Burnout Among College Students

Adam Ciecierski | Anna Ciecierski

Three Decades of Illinois Data, Two Persistent Health Priorities Across All Regions

Frida Fokum | Clarissa Harrington

Translating County Health Data into Actionable SDOH Insights for Illinois Communities

Ba Tung (Jackey) Tran | Brian Chen

VaxConnect WIU: A Systems-Level Campus-Based Vaccine Navigation Model Addressing Structural Gaps in Immunization Access Among University Students

Douglas Mang'anda | Rachael Adebiyi

Why Trust and Friction Matter in Shaping Healthcare Engagement and Access

Allison Morgan-Cook | Kelo Masisi

Working Together: A Community Model for ALS Care Coordination

Anne Marie Doyle

We encourage you to visit and learn about the work of public health students and other public health professionals across the state! Votes for your top three traditional posters and top two creative discovery projects are **due at 12:00 PM on Thursday, September 3**. Winners will be recognized at the Award Luncheon.
Scan the QR code to Vote!





Conference Tracks

Behavioral Health and Wellness



This track takes a whole-person approach to health by connecting mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Sessions will highlight community-based, clinical, and workplace strategies that support behavioral health, including trauma-informed and culturally responsive practices that promote healing, resilience, and balance. Presentations may also focus on worksite wellness programs and organizational approaches that foster healthier, more supportive environments for employees.

Disease Prevention and Health Promotion



This track is all about keeping communities healthy at every stage of prevention. Sessions will explore programs and strategies that support primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention. This includes preventing disease before it starts, early detection and treatment, and managing conditions and improving quality of life. Presentations will also highlight how health communication, outreach, and marketing strategies can be used to engage communities, promote healthy behaviors, and increase participation in prevention programs using evidence-based and community-informed approaches.

Emerging Issues and Hot Topics



This track keeps a pulse on what's new and what's next in public health. Sessions will spotlight current challenges, innovative ideas, and lessons learned from the field, offering space to explore issues that are shaping public health practice right now and in the future. Presentations will work with real-time data, share forward-thinking solutions, and discuss how to meet the demands of tomorrow's healthcare landscape.

Lifting Up the CHW Workforce



This track highlights the people at the heart of community health work. Sessions will focus on ways to support, strengthen, and sustain the Community Health Worker (CHW) workforce through training, professional growth, and meaningful integration into health and social service systems. Presentations will share practical approaches that elevate CHW voices and showcase their impact in communities.

Operationalizing Public Health



This track focuses on the behind-the-scenes work that keeps public health programs running and visible. Sessions will share practical tools and real-world strategies for turning ideas into action, strengthening organizations, and connecting effectively with the communities they serve. Presentations will highlight approaches that support sustainability, efficiency, and clear communication across public health and community-based settings.



2026

Together We Thrive

CONFERENCE

WEDNESDAY | SEPTEMBER 2 | CONFERENCE | DAY TWO

7:30 AM

REGISTRATION OPENS

8:00 AM – 9:00 AM

BREAKFAST AND EXHIBITION OPENS

Plaza G-J

9:00 AM – 10:15 AM

Welcome and Keynote Address

Crowne Ballroom

Rural Health Transformation in Illinois: Advancing the Future Together

Tiffani Saunders, CDP; Illinois Department of Public Health | Tracy Warner, CRHCEO; Illinois Critical Access Hospital Network | Margaret Vaughn, MA, BA; Illinois Rural Health Association | Vicki Weidenbacher-Hope, MSW; National Center for Rural Health Professions, University of Illinois College of Medicine Rockford | Ollie Idowu, JD, MPH, Illinois Primary Health Care Association

As Illinois navigates evolving federal and state priorities, rural health transformation has never been more urgent. This keynote panel brings together state and regional leaders to explore the implementation of rural health initiatives, emerging opportunities for cross-sector collaboration, and the policy and infrastructure challenges shaping healthcare access across Illinois. Attendees will gain insight into strategies to strengthen public health systems and improve health outcomes in rural communities throughout the state.

10:15 AM – 11:00 AM

Poster Presentation | Networking | Exhibitors

Plaza G-J and Pre-Function Area

Continued

**Celebrate
with us
tonight!**



**A very special thank you
to our music entertainment
sponsor for the evening,
Meridian Health Plan!**

11:15 AM – 12:15PM ROUND ONE | BREAKOUT SESSIONS



| From Burnout to Balance: Building Mindfulness Into Work and Learning

Plaza C

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

If burnout, chronic stress, and compassion fatigue are showing up in your workplace or institution, this session is where you need to be. A team of Eastern Illinois University faculty built a mindfulness initiative from scratch and are bringing everything they learned into this room, the wins, the hard lessons, and the science behind why it works. You will walk away understanding how nervous system regulation and somatic practice create environments where people thrive, and will leave with a roadmap designed specifically for your organization and ready to put into action the moment you get back.



| Designing for Action: Applying Behavioral Science to Prevention Engagement and Patient Experience

Plaza B

Hale Forster, Limetree

Healthcare is fundamentally about behavior change, yet many healthcare interventions still aren't optimized to support how people actually decide. This session explores how insights from behavioral science—the study of how people make decisions and follow through on actions—can be used in more effective prevention communications and patient engagement strategies. It focuses on how communication design, choice architecture, and a better understanding of decision making can improve follow-through. Participants will leave with practical resources they can apply to prevention outreach, communications, and engagement programs in their own organizations.



| Novel Integration of Spatial and Social Determinants of Health to Advance Community Through Human-Centered Design

Governor

Brian Chen, University of Illinois Springfield

Health inequities are shaped not only by social and economic factors, but by place, from housing and transportation to healthcare access, all unevenly distributed by segregation and disinvestment. This session explores how spatial and social determinants of health, CHW insight, and human-focused design can provide more informed action.



| Shared Voices, Shared Solutions: A Listening Session on SNAP Experiences Across Illinois

Plaza E

Alizah Harper, Kaitlyn Streitmatter, and Patrobas Wafula, University of Illinois Extension

This interactive breakout session is a facilitated conversation about recent changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and how they affect Illinois communities. In partnership with the Illinois Commission to End Hunger, University of Illinois Extension is gathering real-world feedback from those working with these communities. Attendees will share observations about program changes, the impact to clients, compare experiences, how to communicate updates, and contribute to conversations on nutrition security.

Continued

11:15 AM – 12:15PM **ROUND ONE | BREAKOUT SESSIONS**



| Coaching the Community Health Worker
Plaza D

Shameka Simon, West Side Wellness Chicago, LLC

Community Health Workers (CHWs) are essential to advancing health equity, yet many face burnout and limited support for long-term growth. This interactive session focuses on strengthening CHWs through coaching skills, peer support, and career development. Drawing from community-based work on Chicago's West Side and a Community Health Collective model, attendees will engage in hands-on peer coaching exercises and real-world scenarios. Participants will leave with actionable tools for building coaching practices and peer support structures that strengthen retention, leadership, and sustainable community health systems.



| Designing Sustainability for CHWs: Organizational Processes and Billing Opportunities
Plaza F

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

By the end of 2026, certified Community Health Workers (CHWs, perinatal doulas, and lactation specialists) are expected to bill Medicaid and Medicare for defined services, with additional changes anticipated through the 1115 Waiver rollout in 2027. This session will guide participants through the evolving CHW billing landscape, including Medicaid and Medicare guidelines, certification and documentation requirements, and steps organizations should take to prepare for billing. Participants will explore operational and financial implications for community-based organizations, including options to bill directly, subcontract, or participate in a centralized HUB model, and discuss strategies to strengthen statewide coordination of CHW services across Illinois.



| Bringing the Invisible to Light: Showing the Return on Investment of Public Health
Illinois

Bethanie Albrecht, Woodford County Health Department

Developed with rural partners, the tool models direct and indirect returns, including volunteer mobilization, training retention, and avoided response costs. It supports scenario planning, grant writing, and stakeholder engagement, translating technical inputs into clear, persuasive outputs. Early use shows that even modest activities yield substantial returns when measured against realistic baselines. By reframing preparedness as a strategic investment, the calculator empowers departments to advocate for sustained funding without adding staff burden. Join this session to gain a practical framework for adapting the tool locally and reimagining preparedness metrics to reflect the realities of public health work.

12:15 PM – 1:30 PM **LUNCH**

Crowne Ballroom

Poster Presentation | Networking | Exhibitors
Plaza G-J and Pre-Function Area

Continued

1:45 PM – 2:45 PM ROUND TWO | BREAKOUT SESSIONS



| To Develop or Disrupt: Choosing the Right Change Strategy
Plaza B

Becky Gabany, ChangeBridge Consulting

This session explores how to navigate the tension between incremental and transformational change, particularly during pivotal shifts in the Community Health Worker (CHW) field. As certification and Medicaid reimbursement expand in Illinois, participants will examine when to strengthen existing systems and when to push for more fundamental change. Through practical frameworks and real-world examples, attendees will assess tradeoffs and identify effective strategies for their context. The session also highlights the diverse roles individuals play in advancing change and strengthening the CHW workforce. Participants will leave with tools to lead change more strategically in complex, evolving environments.



| Firearm Safe Storage Initiatives in a Pediatric Health System
Plaza D

Ashley Wolf and Anna Volerman, University of Chicago

This session will focus on designing and implementing a firearm safe storage initiative within a pediatric healthcare system. We will discuss the evidence-based practice of firearm safe storage screening, counseling, and securement device provision, and how it can be adapted to various clinical settings within a pediatric health system, from outpatient clinics to the emergency department.



| Prioritizing Health: The Power of Consistency and Daily Habits
Illinois

Sana Kausar Habiya, Northeastern Illinois University

This interactive session explores how consistency and discipline drive long-term health. Participants will engage in hands-on activities to build realistic habits for nutrition and physical activity. The session emphasizes prioritizing health through small, daily actions. Attendees will develop personalized plans and practical strategies for behavior change. Participants will leave with tools to support sustainable, healthy lifestyles.



| Assessing the Landscape – An Emerging Focus on Men's Health
Plaza A

Andrew Lerch, Illinois Department of Public Health

This presentation explores the emerging focus on men's health within public health, highlighting why a targeted and equity-driven approach is increasingly essential. Attendees will gain insight into key health disparity data, priority topics, and the rationale behind elevating men's health as an important issue. The session also showcases new and expanding men's health initiatives both in and outside Illinois, offering practical examples and references. Participants will learn strategies for strengthening programming, improving professional practice, and effectively advocating for this population. The presentation concludes with actionable steps to integrate men's health into public health through collaboration, resource awareness, and barrier reduction.

Continued



| Better Data, Better Care: Community-Driven Sexual and Reproductive Health in Action

Plaza C

Madeline Quasebarth and Jameika Sampson, Planned Parenthood of Illinois

This session explores how community-driven, data-informed approaches can improve equity and responsiveness in sexual and reproductive health care. Drawing on work from Planned Parenthood of Illinois, presenters demonstrate how integrating patient and provider perspectives with traditional data sources leads to more effective interventions. A case study on cervical cancer screening highlights how mixed-methods evaluation informed practical program improvements. Attendees will learn strategies for sustaining meaningful community engagement and making real-time program adaptations. The session offers actionable tools for practitioners navigating today's rapidly changing SRH landscape.



| CHW Certification

Plaza E

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 and community-based and academic training programs.



| Mapping What Matters: Population Data and Predictive Insights for Equitable Community Care

Plaza F

Haley Klitzing and Samantha Saini, IDPH | Kailee Zito, Kankakee County Health Department | Rebeca Anderson, Will County Health Department | Don Kauerauf, Illinois Public Health Association | Mike Daggitt, Deloitte

Data is only powerful when it drives action. This roundtable showcases three Illinois efforts that use data to close gaps and advance health equity: the Healthy Illinois Survey and its new public Data Explorer tool, a closed-loop referral system connecting communities to care across sectors, and predictive analytics models that identify high-risk rural populations before crises emerge. Together, these sessions offer a comprehensive look at how population-level data, coordinated referrals, and predictive insights can inform more equitable, community-centered care delivery.



| Measuring What Matters: A Practical Approach to Program Evaluation

Governor

Jaweriya Azeem, University of Chicago

This interactive session introduces program evaluation through a live "mini-program" that participants experience and analyze in real time. Attendees will learn key concepts such as the five phases of evaluation by applying them directly to the activity. The session emphasizes practical tools, including SMART goal-setting and simple approaches to interpreting data, making evaluation accessible regardless of prior experience. Participants will also build skills in communicating findings clearly to different audiences while reflecting on common challenges. By the end, attendees will leave with practical strategies and confidence to evaluate and strengthen programs in their own work.

Continued

3:00 PM – 4:00 PM **ROUND THREE | BREAKOUT SESSIONS**



| Art as a Medium for Healing: A CHW-Led Project for Grieving Youth
Plaza D

Maureen Burns and Kaitlyn Macias, The HAP Foundation

Chicago youth are grieving, navigating losses, connected to death, deportation, incarceration, divorce, and migration. Communities disproportionately affected by grief are marginalized and lack access to grief support services. The role of CHWs in delivering accessible, culturally responsive programming that promotes emotional well-being and grief education among youth will be explored. The Emotions + Art = Expression: An Arts Workshop Series for Youth, a program facilitated by the CHWs from The HAP Foundation, is designed to support youth in developing healthy forms of expression while navigating grief. This presentation will describe the program model, highlight facilitation strategies, benefits, and challenges.



| Turning Tension into Trust: Evidence-Based Approaches for Navigating Sensitive Health Conversations
Plaza A

Costadina Aneziris, Illinois ADVANCE

Join Illinois ADVANCE for an interactive and practical discussion on how to become more confident approaching sensitive conversations. This session will discuss skills and actionable evidence-based tools to bring up important health topics and connect with patients. Level up on how to introduce the topics of substance use disorder, smoking cessation, STIs, vaccine hesitancy, cancer screenings, and more, even in time-pressed appointments.



| Navigating Insurance and Finances
Plaza C

Sofia Fernandez, Triage Cancer

This presentation will provide valuable information about how to navigate health insurance, including knowing all available health insurance options, knowing how to pick a plan, and how to maximize the benefits of that plan. Topics that will be covered include: sources of health insurance, recent legislative changes to who has access to different health insurance options, how to compare plan options, appeal rights, and managing medical bills.



| The Youth Advantage: Connecting Young People So Communities Thrive Together
Governor

Chris Egleston, Midland Institute

Your community's most powerful workforce development tool is already there – you just haven't recruited them yet. In this session, discover how 53 Illinois communities are using youth entrepreneurship programs to expose young people to healthcare careers, drive talent retention, and build the community investment that keeps people home. Backed by research showing the impact reaches adult mentors and leaders too, this isn't theory – it's a working model you can bring back Monday morning. Come ready to think differently about who builds your community's future.

Continued



| Together We Thrive: Strengthening CBO Infrastructure for CHW Sustainability

Plaza E

Makeda Coutee, Health and Medicine Policy Research Group | Heidi Arthur and Leticia Reyes-Nash, Health Management Associate | Gina Massuda Barnett, Michael Reese Health Trust

This session explores how community-based organizations can build the infrastructure needed for sustainable social health integration. Presenters will discuss financing, Medicaid readiness, community care hubs, and the role of philanthropy in supporting CBO participation. Attendees will leave with practical strategies to strengthen and sustain CHW-aligned, community-rooted models of care.



| Funding the Connective Tissue: Philanthropy's Role in Building Sustainable CHW Workforce Ecosystems

Plaza F

Satori Bailey, Hunter Family Foundation | Angela Baran, Healthcare Foundation of Northern Lake County | Veronica Sanchez Villa, Equal Hope | Tracey Smith, Illinois Public Health Association

As Community Health Worker (CHW) models expand, the challenge is no longer launching programs; it is building systems that are shaped by and sustain the workforce. This session shares lessons from the Lake County CHW Learning Collaborative, where CHWs are co-designing workforce development, supervision, and financing strategies. Presenters will highlight how centering CHW voice leads to more grounded, effective, and sustainable workforce systems. Participants will engage in an interactive exercise to assess how CHW voice is reflected in their own regional ecosystems. Attendees will leave with practical strategies to elevate CHW leadership and strengthen workforce sustainability.



| From Inspection to Action: Building Connected Food Safety Systems in Local Health Departments

Plaza B

Ba Tung Tran and Brian Chen, University of Illinois Springfield

This session explores how local health departments can turn routine food inspection data into coordinated public health action. Attendees will examine how integrated data systems, dashboard tools, academic-practice partnerships, and Community Health Worker engagement can strengthen communication, improve decision-making, and support more effective food safety operations.

4:00 PM – 5:30 PM

Community Service Activity

Plaza E-F

6:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Dinner | IPHA BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

Crowne Ballroom

Featuring Felix and Fingers Dueling Pianos

Springfield Photo Booth Rental



2026

Together We Thrive

CONFERENCE

THURSDAY | SEPTEMBER 3 | CONFERENCE | DAY THREE

6:30 AM REGISTRATION

7:30 AM – 8:30 AM BREAKFAST | POSTER PRESENTATION |
NETWORKING | EXHIBITORS

Plaza G-J and Pre-Function Area

8:00 AM – 9:00 AM IPHA Annual Business Meeting
Plaza E

9:00 AM – 10:15 AM Welcome | Keynote Address
Crowne Ballroom



Future Forward: Honoring the Past, Activating the Present, and Designing a Healthier Tomorrow Together

Lisa L. Campbell, PhD, MHA, RHIA, CHC, FAHIMA – The Growth Motivator

In an era of rapid change, persistent health disparities, and increasing demands on the public health workforce, thriving requires more than innovation; it requires connection, clarity, and intentional action. From pandemic response to addressing long-standing inequities, public health professionals have carried extraordinary responsibility while navigating constant change. This moment calls for more than endurance; it calls for forward movement. This session invites attendees to reflect on the lessons of the past, engage fully in today's realities, and intentionally shape a stronger future. Through storytelling, insight, and guided reflection, participants will gain a practical framework to determine what to sustain, what to transform, and what to release. Attendees will leave energized, focused, and equipped to lead with purpose, because thriving in public health is not a solo journey. It is one we take together.

10:15 AM – 10:30 AM Poster Presentation | Networking | Exhibitors
Plaza G-J and Pre-Function Area

Continued

Those in PUBLIC HEALTH careers work tirelessly around the globe, helping ensure we have CLEANER WATER to drink, more NUTRITIOUS FOOD to eat, higher QUALITY AIR to breathe, and access to a broad range of services to promote HUMAN HEALTH, from VACCINES and DOCTORS to PUBLIC PARKS.

10:45 AM – 11:45 AM **ROUND FOUR | BREAKOUT SESSIONS**



| **The Silent Strain: Breaking the Stigma and Transforming Stress and Burnout to Resilience**

Plaza B

Sana Kausar Habiya, Northern Illinois University | Jaweriya Azeem, University of Chicago

This session is designed for students, public health professionals, organizational leaders, and community practitioners committed to advancing mental health and wellness. It emphasizes creating psychologically safe spaces and reducing stigma around mental health conversations. The content integrates real-world examples and practical tools that can be applied across diverse settings. Participants will leave with resources to support ongoing learning and implementation.



| **Coming to RESCUE-IL: State-Funded Stock Inhaler Programming in Illinois Schools**

Illinois

Andrea Pappalardo-Wlochowicz, Anna Volerman, and Paige Hardy, University of Illinois Chicago

Illinois funds stock inhalers- undesignated asthma rescue medication that can be used by anyone with asthma symptoms at school- through the RESCUE-IL program. To date, over 6,000 stock inhaler events have been reported to RESCUE-IL. We have been conducting a mixed-methods evaluation of the program since 2023 to determine program satisfaction, benefits, and barriers. We will share the major results from utilization data, mapping, annual surveys, interviews with school staff who reported a stock inhaler event, focus groups with school staff about their thoughts on the protocol, and phone surveys with schools not registered in the online portal.



| **From Prevention to Partnerships: Strengthening Oral Health Across Communities**

Plaza E

Anushree Tiwari, Illinois Department of Public Health | Megan Reutter, Illinois Oral Health Coalition | Jennifer Sherry, Southern Illinois University Carbondale

Oral health doesn't exist in isolation. It's deeply connected to overall health, community well-being, and the systems that serve them. This roundtable explores how medical-dental integration can be advanced through preventive care in routine medical visits, how public health dentistry and workforce legislation are shaping access across Illinois, and how social determinants of health influence the patients we serve. Attendees will leave with practical strategies for advancing integrated, equitable oral health care in their own communities.

Continued

Each public health core science helps us to **PROTECT** and **PROMOTE** the **PUBLIC'S HEALTH** by providing public health practitioners with the answers they need.



| **OUTSafe: Preventing Violence in Illinois' Older Adult LGBTQ+ Population**
Governor

Jeffery Erdman, Illinois Public Health Association

In an effort to address the rising tide of violence against the older LGBTQ+ community in Illinois, this Emerging Issues conference presentation will introduce attendees to IPHA's new statewide LGBTQ+ Older Adult Violence Prevention Program, "OUTSafe." OUTSafe is a free, two-hour cultural competency/anti-violence training program for service professionals working with LGBTQ+ older adults, including social service providers, law enforcement, and medical and healthcare providers. OUTSafe helps providers identify issues that may prevent LGBTQ+ older adults from reporting violence. The program also helps people working with older LGBTQ+ adults create a safe space for sharing the needs of this population.



| **Thriving Together: CHWs Growing Change Through Urban Agriculture**
Plaza C

Jeri Mack, UI Health UIC-OCEAN-HP

This session explores how CHWs can diversify their skills as Urban Agriculture Health Navigators. CHWs are highly skilled in cultivating healthier, more resilient communities through innovative health and social initiatives. This breakout session will highlight how community initiatives are integrating into urban ag to address food insecurity. Attendees will learn examples of Urban Agriculture Health Navigators through Planning & Community Engagement, Production & Garden Activation, Food is Medicine, and prospective training opportunities. Join us to discover how CHWs can demonstrate the work as Urban Agriculture Health Navigators in Food Access, Food Education, and Food as Medicine.



| **The Heart of Rural Health: Empowering CHWs as Connectors, Advocates, and Leaders Through Program-Wide Integration**
Plaza D

Elsy Ayala and Olidia Montoya, Cass County Health Department

This presentation explores how Community Health Workers (CHWs) at the Cass County Health Department serve as vital connectors in rural settings. Discover how these trusted leaders build culturally responsive relationships to support underserved populations. We will detail how CHWs improve access through insurance navigation, public benefits enrollment, and cancer screening initiatives (IBCCP and colorectal). Learn how community partnerships address social determinants of health and reduce barriers to care. Participants will gain practical strategies to integrate and sustain the CHW workforce to advance health equity and improve rural health outcomes.

Continued

**PUBLIC HEALTH aims to provide groups of people with the RIGHT
TO BE HEALTHY and live in conditions that SUPPORT HEALTH.**



| “That’s Not Who We Are”: How Civic Identity Can Bridge Political Divides

Plaza A

Allie Boman, Boman Communications, LLC

In a small city—where politics run hot—immigrant advocates, public health professionals, and conservative business leaders rarely sit at the same table. Yet rising housing instability forced an unlikely collaboration. This session shares how organizers used evidence-based public health principles and practical communication strategies to build trust across political divides. Through interactive exercises and group conversation, participants will explore values-based messaging, narrative framing, and civic identity approaches that can be applied in their communities. Attendees will leave with practical strategies for engaging diverse partners and strengthening collaborations that help communities thrive together.



| Building Bridges Across Illinois: A Roundtable on Public Health Research Collaboration

Plaza F

Aimee Janssen-Robison, Eastern Illinois University | Susan Olivo-Marston, Southern Illinois University School of Medicine | Amanda Harvey, Nikkie Hillier, and Misty Rhoads, Eastern Illinois University

Public health challenges rarely respect county or institutional boundaries, yet research efforts across the state remain largely fragmented. This interactive roundtable brings together public health professionals, academic faculty, and graduate students to explore how cross-sector and cross-institutional collaboration can strengthen the evidence base for public health practice throughout Illinois. Participants will share current research interests, identify gaps and opportunities, and begin building the relationships and frameworks needed to launch collaborative projects. The session is designed to spark new partnerships between practitioners and researchers who share overlapping goals but may have limited opportunity to connect outside of siloed professional environments.

12:00 PM EXHIBITION HALL CLOSES

Continued

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12:00 PM – 1:00 PM **ROUND FIVE | BREAKOUT SESSIONS**



| Bridging Survivorship and Caregiver Gaps: Rerouting Programs for Oncology Patients and Providers

Plaza B

Dustin Wilson and Ellen Nieman, Wellness House

This session highlights a dual-focused approach to expanding psychosocial cancer survivorship support for patients and healthcare professionals. Grounded in Wellness House's Rerouting: Choosing a Course After Cancer program and supported by a grant from the IDPH, it provides a high-level overview of this scalable, evidence-based model. Attendees will explore key concepts such as needs assessment, goal setting, self-care, and Survivorship Action Planning. The session also introduces how Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) strategies can support integration into healthcare and community settings, offering actionable insights to strengthen equitable survivorship care.



| How to Develop Toolkits for Disease Prevention

Plaza E

Emily Inman and Claire Hughes, Illinois Public Health Association

Public health toolkits are essential resources that help organizations, community health workers, and other professionals to implement consistent, effective, and community-informed practices. This session will explore the key components of developing practical and user-friendly toolkits that support education, outreach, program implementation, and systems change. Participants will learn strategies for identifying audience needs, organizing content, incorporating culturally responsive materials, and identifying appropriate tools. The session will highlight examples of IPHA toolkits, implementing them, and methods development and guidance on strengthening collaboration, sustainability, and public health impact. Examples will include Colorectal Cancer, Breast Cancer, Youth Cannabis Driving Prevention, and more.



| Leveraging Storytelling Campaigns to Address Vaccine Hesitancy: Advocacy Skills and Tools in Action

Illinois

Arlene Ryndak, Grandparents for Vaccines and Association of Public Health Nurses

Vaccine hesitancy continues to challenge public health efforts, requiring new approaches that extend beyond traditional messaging. This session highlights how to build advocacy skills and confidence and how collective, authentic stories can strengthen public health efforts. Pairing the Association of Public Health Nurses Public Health Policy Advocacy Toolkit with the grassroots initiative, Grandparents for Vaccines, participants will learn practical strategies to build trust and influence attitudes. Through reflections and interactive exercises, participants will develop their own advocacy narratives and identify actionable next steps, including the option to make a one-minute vaccine-related video as a contribution to Grandparents for Vaccines.



| Together We Thrive Against AI-Driven Health Misinformation

Plaza A

Tobiloba Olatokun and Brian Chen, University of Illinois Springfield

AI is reshaping the health information environment and creating new public health risks. This session explores how public health agencies can prevent, detect early incidents of, and reduce harms from AI-generated health misinformation. Attendees will learn practical strategies for communication, surveillance, and workforce readiness. By emphasizing actionable approaches that strengthen community trust and agency response capacity, participants will gain useful real-world tools.

Continued



| **Starting a CHW Service: It is a Marathon, Not a Sprint!**
Plaza C

Brittany Cain and Gregory Scott, Carle Health

Starting a Community Health Worker (CHW) service is a long-term commitment that requires pacing, endurance, and strategic planning to avoid burnout and ensure lasting impact. A CHW service must be built to sustain the complex, evolving needs of a community often requiring a “slow and steady” approach to gain stakeholder buy-in and establish trust. Interactive case studies will emphasize CHW sustainability and services.



| **Rethinking Community Health Worker Training:
Prioritizing Knowledge Over Behavior Change**
Plaza D

Tamara Hamlish, University of Illinois Chicago | Tracey Smith, Illinois Public Health Association | Gloria Barrera, University of Illinois Chicago

CHW training is often modeled after traditional healthcare provider education with an emphasis on behavior change, as well as knowledge acquisition. This model does not take into account the unique strengths CHWs bring through cultural knowledge and deep connections to local communities. A training approach that prioritizes technical knowledge that builds on existing skills and expertise, will teach CHWs to navigate the healthcare system, coordinate care, and advocate for clients and communities.



| **Building a Climate-Ready Illinois: Integrating Health Data
and Cross-Sector Collaboration**
Plaza F

Ian Brooks, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign | Graham Briggs, Illinois Department of Public Health | Anna Pinsoneault, University of Illinois System

Extreme weather is reshaping public health practice across Illinois. This roundtable introduces two complementary efforts addressing that challenge: the Illinois Health Explorer, a data visualization tool combining health and environmental data to help local health departments prepare for extreme weather events, and the Illinois Weather and Health Interdisciplinary Collaborative, a statewide multi-sector partnership turning shared learning into action. Attendees will learn preparedness strategies and practical approaches to building and sustaining cross-sector partnerships for emerging challenges.



| **From Policy to Practice: Implementing Medicaid Lactation
Coverage to Advance Breastfeeding Equity in Illinois**
Governor

Margaret Saltysiak, Naperville Lactation

This session highlights statewide efforts, developed in partnership with IPHA, to implement Medicaid coverage for lactation services. It focuses on supporting lactation professionals in enrolling as Medicaid providers and delivering reimbursable care. The session will showcase practical strategies to navigate enrollment, billing, and system challenges. Attendees will gain actionable approaches to advance breastfeeding equity and improve program implementation.

1:00 PM LUNCH | AWARDS

Crowne Ballroom

2:30 PM – 3:00 PM Closing Session | Raffle | Prizes

3:00 PM ADJOURN

SAVE THE DATE



IPHA 86TH ANNUAL PUBLIC HEALTH WORKFORCE CONFERENCE

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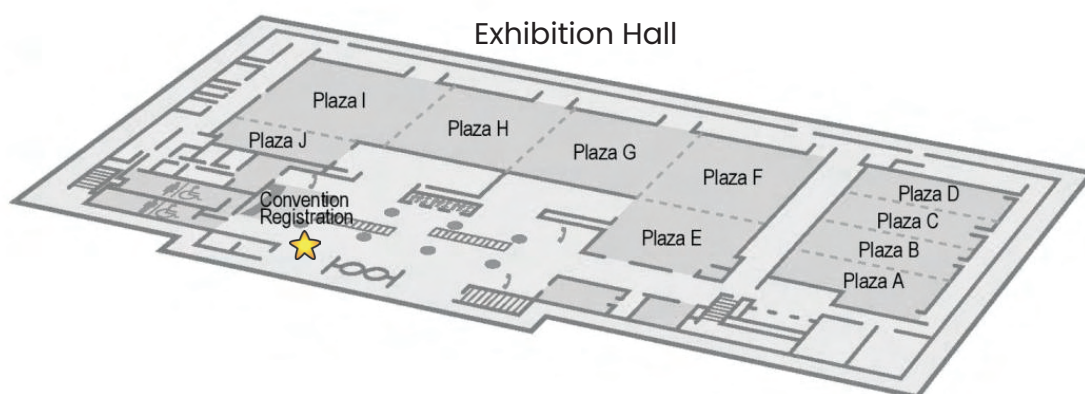
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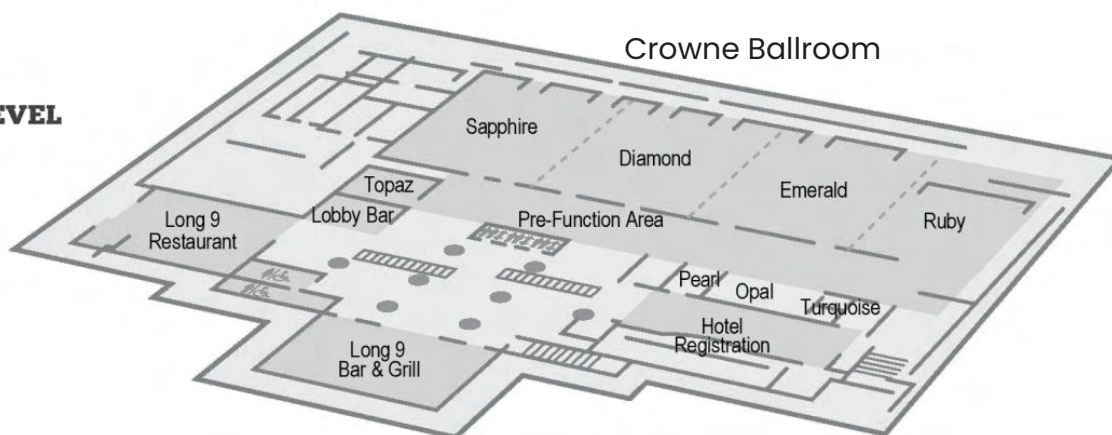
PLAZA LEVEL

1st Floor



BALLROOM LEVEL

2nd Floor



CONFERENCE LEVEL

3rd Floor

