Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago (PHIMC) enhances the capacity of public health and health care systems to promote health equity and expand access to services. Through organizational development, system transformation, fiscal management, and program implementation, PHIMC leads efforts to strengthen the public health infrastructure in Illinois.

Protecting our Patients (POP) is a campaign mobilizing health care teams to reduce stigmas that hinder healthy patient outcomes. POP interventions promote practices that improve patient experiences and support comprehensive care, including: 1) integrating routine HIV screening into general health care and 2) providing affirming health care for all, especially those most marginalized from health care systems.

THE DEVELOPMENT
After more than seven years working to integrate HIV screening into general medical settings, PHIMC recognized health professionals face personal barriers to fully implementing this standard of care. In 2014, PHIMC partnered with Illinois Department of Public Health and a cross-sector team to address these issues and reduce homophobia and transphobia in clinics. The team included health care, public health, community-based, communications, and creative professionals. PHIMC used the following methods to better understand how health care clinics were implementing routine HIV screening and serving Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) individuals:

- Surveyed existing literature and campaigns;
- Engaged health care teams and health professionals through focus groups, conversations, and interviews; and
- Collected stories from African-American and Latino/a LGBT individuals about their experiences in health care settings.

PHIMC synthesized the information collected using a combination of storytelling, training, peer support, visual art, and communications strategies to mobilize support among health care professionals.

THE CHAMPIONS
There are many heroes already working in clinical settings, caring for patients, and promoting best practices. Their stories of providing routine screening and affirming care inspire others to do the same. POP elevates these heroes into POP Champions who lead peers in understanding their role in reducing stigmas, encouraging peers to be leaders, and keeping the conversation and campaign alive. POP supports the efforts of these champions and heroes to promote sustainable change in service delivery.

THE INTERVENTIONS
POP currently has two interventions that address stigmas that prevent healthy patient outcomes:

**Routine HIV Screening:** POP promotes the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) recommendation that everyone 13-64 years old be tested for HIV. By screening everyone as part of routine health care instead of targeting certain patients, clinics can increase the number of individuals who are diagnosed early, reduce stigma surrounding the disease, and effectively link patients to care and services.

**Affirming Medical Care:** POP promotes collaborative health care relationships where patients feel comfortable accessing health services and discussing their personal health needs. Using supportive language and behavior to create affirming and positive environments allows for open conversation about all aspects of a patient’s health. Through affirming care practices, patients are viewed and treated as unique individuals influenced by cultural experiences.

To get involved, visit [www.phimc.org/pop](http://www.phimc.org/pop) or contact:

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