



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**2019 Illinois Reentry Conference: In These Shoes**

Springfield, IL - On March 12, the 2019 Illinois Reentry Conference: In These Shoes kicked off at University of Illinois Springfield's Public Affairs Center. The two-day conference attracted nearly 100 participants and featured speakers, panels, workshops, and networking opportunities for individuals and organizations committed to serving populations impacted by incarceration and the justice system throughout Illinois. The conference is sponsored by Community Reentry Project (CRP), organized by Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago (PHIMC), and funded by Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH).

The first day opened with a plenary on The Importance of Reentry Services in Illinois by Gladyse C. Taylor, Assistant Director of Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC). Conference activities continued with special presentations by Adler University and PHIMC's Protecting our Patients (POP) Campaign. Elena Quintana, Executive Director of Adler University's Institute on Public Safety and Social Justice, invited attendees to participate in a Social Exclusion Simulation, an interactive exercise designed for participants to experience the barriers that formerly incarcerated people face upon reentry to society. POP representatives Blair Harvey, Adria Husband, and Annette Rizzo of PHIMC led participants through interactive exercises exploring how stigma impacts health outcomes and patient experiences for marginalized populations. The POP Campaign features diverse stories of marginalized populations used to mobilize service providers to create affirming environments where individuals feel comfortable accessing resources and discussing their personal health needs.

The conference continued March 13 with opening remarks by Marcus King of the Office of the Comptroller, followed by State Representative Sue Scherer (D) of Illinois' 96th District, who commended CRP and its partner agencies for their important and life-saving work. At a mid-morning ceremony, Mr. King and Ms. Taylor of IDOC received Community Reentry Champion Awards, presented annually in recognition of exemplary service and dedication to the reentry community. Terrence Hill accepted the award on behalf of Ms. Taylor. PHIMC Reentry Manager Rashonda Johnson and Project Coordinator Caitlyn Hicks also received awards from the Office of the Comptroller Susana A. Mendoza in honor of their dedication to promoting health equity and reducing recidivism. Later on, session topics include Getting to Zero Illinois, linkage to treatment and elimination of hepatitis C, innovative approaches to reentry services, dispelling myths about incarceration, and youth mental health in the juvenile justice system.

PHIMC serves as both lead agency for CRP and lead organizer for the conference, which launches the 20th year of CRP. In 1999, the Health Resources and Services Administration and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention pioneered the Corrections Demonstration Project, which supported HIV and

infectious disease treatment in correctional facilities and discharge planning and case management to link clients to services following release. "The Community Reentry Project was designed to show that these services would improve health outcomes as well as support transition from incarceration to community," says Karen A. Reitan, Executive Director of PHIMC. "The achievements of the speakers and organizations here today are a testament to that mission, as well as the success and growth of the project over the last 20 years." PHIMC reports show that, in 2016 alone, CRP achieved a 100% engagement and retention rate in HIV primary care, connected 251 people with intensive case management, supported 1,107 individuals to obtain state identification, and reduced the recidivism rate to 19% among clients served, compared to the 47% statewide.

CRP partner agencies at the conference reflect the leaders in Illinois working to support formerly incarcerated people successfully returning home: AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Cermak Health Services of Cook County, Children's Home & Aid, Christian Community Health Center, Illinois Department of Public Health, Men & Women in Prison Ministries, Midwest AIDS Training + Education Center, and PHIMC.

### **About PHIMC**

Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago (PHIMC) enhances the capacity of public health and healthcare 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 public health infrastructure in Illinois.

### **About Community Reentry Project**

Community Reentry Project (CRP) is a multi-stakeholder project that coordinates efforts to ensure that people living with and at highest risk for HIV transition smoothly from incarceration to communities. CRP facilitates a comprehensive system of HIV care and support services throughout Illinois. Partners include AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Cermak Health Services of Cook County, Children's Home & Aid, Christian Community Health Center - Footprints, Men & Women in Prison Ministries, and Midwest AIDS Training + Education Center.