



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, October 3, 2019

Contact: RoiAnn Phillips, Communications Director, roiann.phillips@phimc.org, 708-466-2650

**ADVANCING CRIMINAL, HEALTH, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE:
HONORING A TWENTY-YEAR LEGACY AND BUILDING SKILLS FOR TODAY**

Chicago, IL - On October 3, the [2019 Illinois Reentry Conference: Advancing Criminal, Health, and Social Justice](#) kicks off at University of Illinois at Chicago - Student Center East at 8:30am. More than 150 attendees are expected, representing leaders in the fields of public health, healthcare, social services, and criminal justice, as well as community members and activists in these areas. The conference goal is to build skills around health equity, social justice, and reentry services for current and formerly incarcerated individuals, while honoring the legacy and development of reentry services over the last twenty years.

[Community Reentry Project](#) (CRP), a program of [Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago](#) (PHIMC), hosts the Illinois Reentry Conference twice annually. This year, CRP celebrates twenty years of providing a comprehensive system of HIV prevention, care, and support services to ensure people living with HIV or at risk of HIV transition smoothly from incarceration to communities. Initially known as Corrections Demonstration Project, CRP was founded in 1999 by Centers for Disease Control and Health Resources & Services Administration. In 2010, Illinois Department of Public Health granted funds to PHIMC to lead CRP. Under PHIMC's direction, CRP now:

- provides corrections case management to an average of 237 people living with HIV per year, an increase of 80% since 2010;
- assists an average of 1,196 formerly incarcerated individuals with obtaining legal identification per year, an increase of 600% since 2010; and
- distributes an average of 6,432 discharge planning packets per year, an increase of 15% since 2010.

“Community Reentry Project is a cornerstone of PHIMC’s work,” said Karen A. Reitan, Executive Director of PHIMC. “Social and criminal justice are intrinsically linked to public health and individual healthcare outcomes. This conference delves into that intersection, highlighting the importance of tackling stigmas and inequities in every healthcare setting. Through the efforts of CRP and our partner agencies, we’ve seen improved health outcomes for people living with and at highest risk for HIV as they reenter Illinois communities, increased HIV screening, reduced HIV transmission, and reduced recidivism. This work is essential and remains vital to public health initiatives across Illinois and beyond.”

Plenaries and workshops will address stigma in health and community settings, health equity and social justice, mental health, linkage to care, criminal justice reform, and more. The day also includes live performance and moderated discussion.

Featured sessions include:

- Harm Reduction As a Means to Reduce Incarceration with Emphasis on HIV, HCV, and STIs
- When Being Out Doesn't Mean You're In: Advancing Social Justice through Workforce Development, Policy, and Planning
- Criminal Justice Reform in Illinois: Bold Transformation or Tinkering Around the Edges
- [Protecting our Patients \(POP\) Campaign](#), a PHIMC initiative that mobilizes service providers to create affirming environments and decrease stigma
- Presentation of the Community Reentry Champion Award

Speakers include:

- Thomas Dart, Cook County Sheriff
- Suzanne Carlberg-Racich, Director of Research, Chicago Recovery Alliance
- Michael Gaines, Corrections Coordinator, Illinois Department of Public Health
- Kenya Garrett-Burnett, Director of HIV/AIDS Legal Services, Legal Council for Health Justice
- Karen A. Reitan, Executive Director, Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago
- Rashonda Johnson, Reentry Manager, Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago
- Channyn Lynne Parker, Manager of External Relations, Howard Brown Health Center
- Benjamin Ruddell, Director of Criminal Justice Policy, ACLU of Illinois

###

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, systems transformation, fiscal management, and program implementation, PHIMC leads efforts to strengthen public health infrastructure in Illinois.

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, Christian Community Health Center - Footprints, Legal Council for Health Justice, and Men and Women in Prison Ministries.