

## People Matter

*Following is an excerpt from PHIMC's President and CEO Karen A. Reitan's opening remarks at the annual meeting of the National Network of Public Health Institutes in February 2021.*

I wanted to take a few minutes and talk about some lessons learned during this pandemic. These are not new lessons – I've learned them before – but revisiting them in the shadow of COVID-19 has highlighted them in a new way for me, and maybe also for you.

The first thing is that People Matter. People shape things, like our public policies. They make our vaccines. They provide care and comfort. They help us navigate our lives. They denigrate science and shape the narrative.



*Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett, a lead scientist in developing COVID-19 vaccine*

Now, this is not my first pandemic. My work began in 1993 and has been largely focused on HIV. Certainly, anyone who lived through the early days of the AIDS crisis knows that people matter, but it seems so much more acute now with the 24-hour news cycle, the internet – which, fun fact, was not a thing in 1993 – bringing us everything, the memes, the videos, all the social media options. All these people and how they have mattered and shaped our nation's response to COVID-19 are at our fingertips all the time, reminding us constantly of their impact and pushing us in so many different directions.

De-politicizing public health is an essential next step as we end our first year of COVID-19. The bifurcation of our nation over every public health response – masks, vaccines, tests, shutdowns – and the erosion of faith in the public institutions charged with guiding us through times like these is because of people – people created this situation and people need to undo it.

Context Rarely Matters. This is something that has become more clear to me during COVID-19 than any

other time.

How many of us were raised to listen to both sides, try to understand where someone is coming from, don't rush to judgment without knowing all the facts, and to find common ground? This last year, particularly this last summer, has made it so clear that there are not two sides to every story when one side is injustice or racism or oppression or lies.

As we've seen from the murder of George Floyd, the shooting of Jacob Blake, the actions of Kyle Rittenhouse, the reactions to Black Lives Matter, the insurrection at our nation's Capital, and the million other things that happen all the time that we don't see, when injustice happens, people often try to sell the notion of two sides and call for calm and reconciliation as a means to undermine the work of undoing systemized racism and the oppression it brings.

There is no context for injustice – not for racial or economic injustice, not for jumping the vaccine line, and not for inequitable pandemic response roll out. None of it. We must have hard conversations if we are to recognize the part that we as individuals, and public health as a profession, have had in promoting injustice and the role that we must play in promoting change.

We Matter. This is not always an easy thing to remember in the face of such an enormous thing like a pandemic, but we do. As individuals and as organizations, we matter, and we will continue to bring our best selves to build a post-pandemic public health system.

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Below, we tell you about the people who matter in our everyday work, and we offer ways for you to get involved -- in building a new public health workforce, in corrections discharge planning, in supporting and affirming LGBTQ+ students, and more.

We hope you will take a few minutes to read on, and we welcome any questions or comments you may have. Please [reach out](#) anytime.



Thank you.

Karen A. Reitan  
President & Chief Executive Officer

## COVID-19 Resources

### Does Your Non-Profit Need PPE?

If you are a non-profit, you can get discounted Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) through an agreement initiated by National Network of Public Health Institutes (NNPHI), PPE Working Group, facilitated by our very own CEO Karen A. Reitan.

[Public Health Solutions \(PHS\)](#), PHIMC's sister institute in New York, vetted multiple PPE vendors and found [W.B. Mason](#) to be a reliable vendor. W.B. Mason has established a purchasing contract to provide partners with competitive, negotiated rates and access to PPE.

How to get started:

1. [Click here](#) to register an account.
2. Enter the PHS Member Code – identified as the instant registration code on the website – S00326-PHS and click Submit.
3. Enter your organization's information and set up your account details.
4. After successfully registering, you will have access to your new account and are ready to place orders!

## Neighborhood Walkability: Seed Initiative



*South East Chicago Commission (SECC)  
Beautification*

PHIMC is growing its portfolio in public health and the built environment, applying a health and racial equity lens to neighborhood walkability.

In 2020, through the Healthy Chicago Seed Grant initiative, PHIMC partnered with six community-based organizations to lead locally-driven activities which improved the built environment, increased walkability in communities of color, and improved resident access to nearby public transit stations.

These [Seed grantees](#) advanced their goals by conducting community walkability assessments, developing short- and long-term action plans, and implementing small-scale interventions to improve community walkability. In addition to the Seed projects, Seed grantees also provided essential services and resources to residents in response to COVID-19, and adapted their community engagement strategies to ensure the vision and voice of those most impacted by walkability barriers were central to the planning and implementation of projects.

Seed projects align with a collaborative effort spearheaded by [Elevated Chicago](#), whose work aims to connect improved community walkability with access to public transit, build community power, and drive systems change to advance racial equity and equitable transit-oriented development (e-TOD).

PHIMC staff engaged CDPH and Elevated Chicago as thought partners in four interactive sessions they facilitated with Seed grantees, [Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children \(CLOCC\)](#), and other City agencies. A central theme that emerged is the need for greater communication and collaboration between community organizations and City agencies, both for project-based planning and comprehensive planning, in order to make equitable investments that support walkable communities and healthy environments.

Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) funded PHIMC's work to lead the Seed Initiative in 2019 and 2020. [Visit our website](#) for more details on the community-led projects.





Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) Mosaic Butterfly Installation

## Corrections Discharge Planning Training

PHIMC's [Community Reentry Project](#) has now hosted three Corrections Discharge Planning Trainings virtually for providers and other community partners serving the corrections community. This free, two-day virtual training is designed to educate and inform providers in both community-based and healthcare settings on the needs of current and formerly incarcerated individuals. At each training, sessions are led by individuals with lived experience of incarceration, to elevate their voices and give them a chance to thrive post-incarceration. Each training sold out within two weeks.



### Participants Say . . .

*"I really enjoyed this training. I truly wish all those that deal with this community could take this training. I am sure this training enlightened a lot of people. Everyone did an AMAZING job."*

*"The training was very informative and it was very good to hear from people who had been incarcerated and had first-hand experience and knowledge."*

New training dates will be released later this month. [Sign-up here](#) to receive updates from the Community Reentry Project.

## PHIMC Launches New Routine HIV Screening Initiative

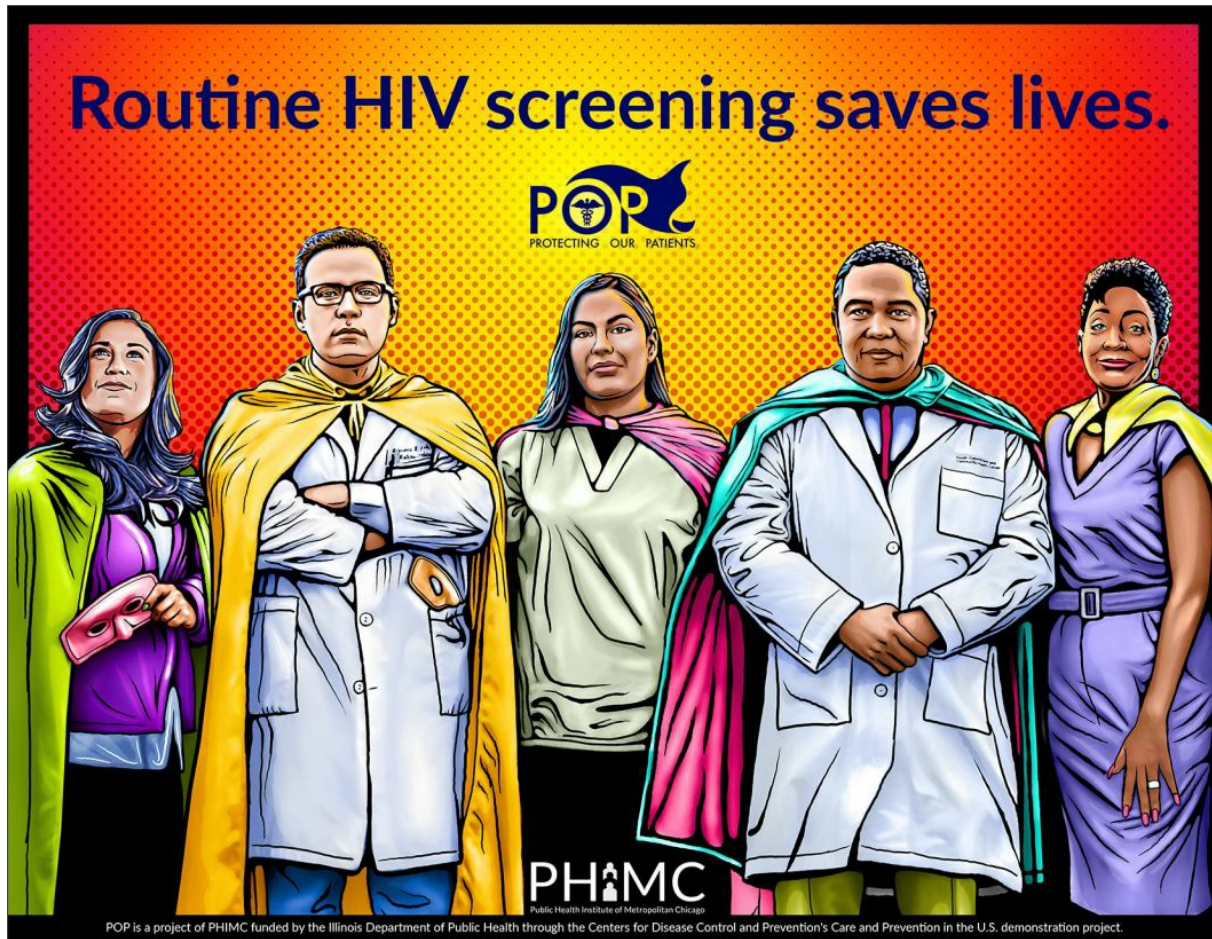
PHIMC is excited to launch a multi-year initiative to expand routine HIV screening in general healthcare settings across Illinois. Nearly 40% of new HIV infections are transmitted by people who don't know

they have the virus. Routine HIV screening is a critical step in diagnosing people with HIV and getting them into care to prevent HIV transmission and to improve their quality of life.

**PHIMC is looking for new sites** that are interested in implementing routine HIV screening in a general medical setting. Eligible sites will receive capacity-building assistance and resources to support implementing this new practice.

PHIMC has been honing our model for integrating routine HIV screening in diverse healthcare settings since 2007. Learn more [here](#).

*For more information, please contact [Susanne Schnell](#).*



## Northeast Illinois Area Health Education Center Seeks Students, Trainers, and Mentors

Through Northeast Illinois AHEC, PHIMC is preparing the next generation of public health professionals to better serve low-income communities, rural communities, communities of color, and people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or gender-nonbinary. We are also inspiring, supporting, and encouraging young people from underserved communities to consider careers in the health professions.

**Become an AHEC Scholar.** AHEC provides experiential learning opportunities to cohorts of students who are committed to improving healthcare in rural and underserved communities. The AHEC Scholars Program includes 40 hours of didactics and 40 hours of clinical work each year. Every AHEC Scholar receives a stipend and an Illinois AHEC Scholars Certificate, setting them apart from other students in an increasingly competitive environment.

**Apply to become an  
AHEC Scholar**



**Become an AHEC Trainer.** PHIMC seeks diverse subject matter trainers to provide professional development sessions to scholars on AHEC's six core topics. These one-hour, pre-recorded sessions will allow scholars to glean various perspectives. Trainers will be provided guidance on how to submit videos and will receive an honorarium.

[Apply to become an AHEC Trainer](#)

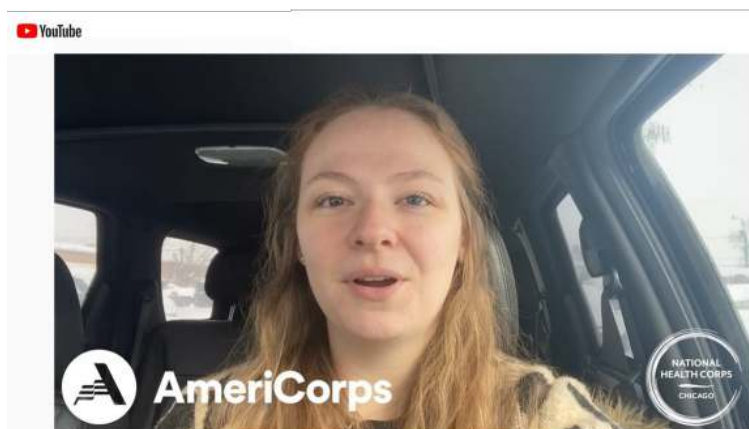
**Become an AHEC Mentor.** PHIMC seeks mentors to share valuable experience, skills, and knowledge on AHEC's six core topics. Mentors will meet twice annually with cohorts of scholars and provide career exploration to guide them on their professional journeys. Mentors will be provided a toolkit to help structure these meetings and will receive an honorarium.

[Apply to become an AHEC Mentor](#)

Northeast Illinois AHEC is part of the National AHEC Organization developed by Congress in 1971 to recruit, train, and retain a health professions workforce committed to underserved populations, and is managed and administered by PHIMC. The Illinois AHEC Network Program is funded by grant No. U77HP26847 from the Health Resources and Services Administration, and administered by the National Center for Rural Health Professions at the University of Illinois at Chicago, College of Medicine – Rockford.

For more information, including details on AHEC's core topics, please visit [bit.ly/NEAHEC](http://bit.ly/NEAHEC)

## AmeriCorps Service



### A Day in the Life

Watch National Health Corps (NHC) Chicago 2020-21 AmeriCorps member Lauren Beagle share a "[day in the life of service](#)" in her role as Health Educator serving her host site, Advocate Children's Hospital, on the Ronald McDonald Care Mobile Clinic.

**Become an AmeriCorps Host Site.** We seek organizations interested in hosting an AmeriCorps member for up to one year of service, to expand service and education capacity around:

[Learn More](#)

- Substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery
- Reducing prescription drug and opioid use
- Responding to COVID-19
- Increasing physical activity and nutrition, and
- Increasing older adult health.

[Visit our website](#) to see the Request for Applications, Host Site Applications, and Position Description templates for NHC Chicago and SUD Allies.

*Host site slots are still open for the 2021-2022 program year.*

**Become an AmeriCorps Member.** Member applications will open later this month for candidates interested in the 2021-2022

[Learn More](#)

service term. To learn more about becoming a member and to view position descriptions from past service terms, [visit our website](#).

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***Thank you AmeriCorps members for your dedication and passion to serve with us in Chicago, we are grateful for the services and education you provide in our communities.***





## Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Allies AmeriCorps Members, 2020-2021



**AmeriCorps**



### Substance Use Disorder Services and Medication-Assisted Treatment: By the Numbers

From 2016 - 2020, Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) funded PHIMC to serve as lead agent to provide training, technical assistance, and capacity building to 18 agencies in Chicago that provide Substance Use Disorder Services (SUDS) and Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT).

PHIMC is overjoyed to report that from January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020:

- Our partners provided 22,228 screening sessions, an evidence-based practice used to identify, reduce, and prevent problematic use and abuse of alcohol and other substances. This is a 50% increase from 2019.
- 2,271 people received treatment for substance use disorders, including residential, recovery home, outpatient, MAT, and more. This is roughly the same as 2019. To think that our partners were able to provide the same level of care through a global pandemic shows their dedication to delivering high-quality behavioral health services.

Thank you to each of our tremendous partners for their prevention efforts, SUDS Treatment and Screening, MAT Treatment, and activities such as overdose kit distribution and training people in overdose reversal: [A Safe Haven Foundation](#), [Access Community Health Network](#), [AMITA Health/Alexian Brothers](#), [Alternatives, Inc.](#), [Association House of Chicago](#), [Aunt Martha's Health & Wellness](#), [Caritas](#), [Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago](#), [Cook County Health Foundation](#), [Esperanza Health Centers](#), [Haymarket Center](#), [Healthcare Alternative Systems](#), [Lawndale Christian Health Center](#), [New Age Services Corporation](#), [PCC Community Wellness Center](#), [Polish American Association](#), [St. Leonard's Ministries](#), and [Trilogy Behavioral Healthcare](#).

### Illinois Safe Schools Alliance

Illinois Safe Schools Alliance, which has made PHIMC its home since 2019, has not paused for a



moment due to COVID-19. Winter highlights include:

**Queering Virtual Spaces: LGBTQ+ Youth Engagement in a Time of Remote Learning** - In response to the changing social climate, the Alliance hosted a virtual panel titled *Queering Virtual Spaces: LGBTQ+ Youth Engagement in a Time of Remote Learning* on Tuesday, December 8, 2020. Panelists included Carly Jugenitz with [Chicago Public Schools](#), Carolyn Wahlskog with [360 Youth Services](#), Deborah Levine with [LGBT Centers](#), and Annika Fuhrer, [Alliance Youth](#) Committee Member. PHIMC's very own Nat Duran (they/them), Youth Engagement Manager for the Alliance, served as moderator. The panel addressed important questions about how to create affirming online environments for LGBTQ+ students who hold multiple identities.

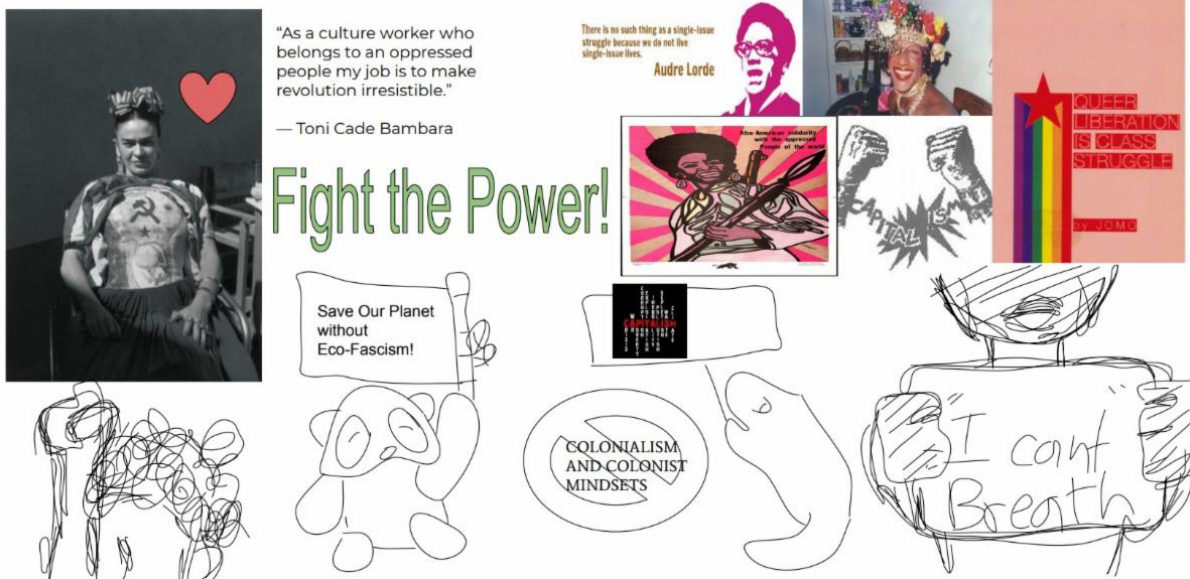
**Youth Leadership Summit** - Illinois Safe Schools Alliance hosted a Youth Leadership Summit in January. Although they were not able to meet face-to-face, participants still felt a sense of connection. Feedback indicates that everyone who participated gained an increased sense of self-confidence and felt more prepared to lead organizing efforts in their own communities.

### Participants Say . . .

*"It's a great way to meet and spend time with other people, especially during the pandemic."*

*"I really really appreciated the LGBTQ+ Sex Ed workshop, queer sex education is rarely talked about and it is usually very difficult for young people to ask about those kinds of topics, and school rarely teaches anything other than 'don't get pregnant!' lol. I also appreciated the opportunity to ask anonymous questions :)"*

*"My favorite part was the workshop on drawing people into and keeping them interested in your GSA"*

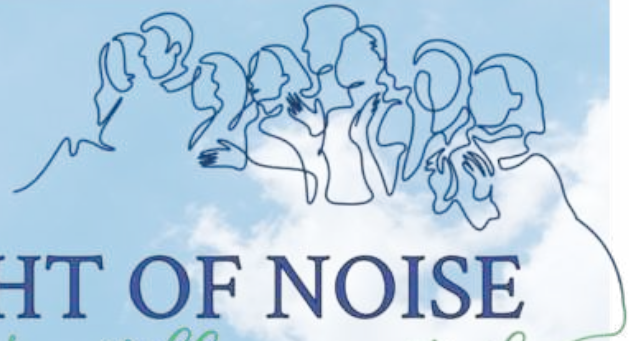


*Collective artwork that came out of the Vive la Révolution workshop led by Youth Committee member Zara during the Youth Leadership Summit*

## Night of Noise: We're Still Connected



SUNDAY, APRIL 25, 2021  
6:00 P.M. - 7:00 P.M.



# NIGHT OF NOISE

*we're still connected*

Reserve your tickets today!  
[www.phimc.org/night-of-noise](http://www.phimc.org/night-of-noise)

We are thrilled to invite you to *Night of Noise: We're Still Connected*, the annual variety show first hosted by Illinois Safe Schools Alliance in 2016, which will be held virtually on **Sunday, April 25, 2021 from 6:00 pm until 7:00 pm.**

Night of Noise marks the end of a Day of Silence, wherein over 10,000 middle school, high school, and university students worldwide take a day-long vow of silence to honor those in the LGBTQ+ community whose voices often go unheard.

Our Night of Noise celebration brings together many talented Chicago-based artists and performers. This year, we are overjoyed to welcome back talented performers from previous years, including tap-dancer extraordinaire, Bril Barrett, the vivacious performer of music and poetry, June, and About Face Theatre. We are equally excited to highlight new acts by Fashion designer Sky Cubacub and performer Nate Shapiro.

We hope you'll consider joining us for *Night of Noise: We're Still Connected* to help strengthen our important work of advocating with and on behalf of LGBTQ+ youth, promoting health equity, and seeking justice for marginalized people. Standard tickets are \$50.00 and VIP tickets can be purchased at \$100.00.

To buy tickets or learn more about this year's celebration, please visit [phimc.org/night-of-noise/](http://phimc.org/night-of-noise/).

Please contact [Danny Whalen](#) with any questions, concerns, or sponsorship inquiries.

[Buy Tickets](#)

**Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago**

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