



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Reentry Support in Illinois: State leaders, service providers, and community members  
rediscover, reimagine, and rebuild equitable practices in criminal, health, and social justice**

CHICAGO, IL - On March 2, the 2023 Illinois Reentry Conference: Advancing Criminal, Health, and Social Justice kicks off online at 10:00am CST. More than 250 people have registered this year, representing leaders, community members, and activists in the fields of public health, healthcare, social services, and criminal justice. This annual conference is designed to build skillsets around health equity, social justice, and reentry services to support justice-involved individuals. This year's speakers will discuss entrepreneurship, employment readiness, transgender and gender-diverse care for people who are incarcerated, finding support post-release, the role of government in reentry, substance use treatment and recovery, and securing health care upon release. The day closes with a personal story of incarceration, release, and reentry, followed by the presentation of a Community Reentry Champion Award.

Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago (PHIMC), through its Community Reentry Project (CRP), hosts the Illinois Reentry Conference annually. CRP provides HIV health education to approximately 2,290 detainees in the Cook County Department of Corrections, assists approximately 600 formerly incarcerated individuals with obtaining legal identification, and distributes approximately 2,475 discharge planning packets annually, under PHIMC's direction. Additionally, CRP hosts a variety of networking and training opportunities for people with lived experience and professionals working in reentry, HIV, behavioral health, healthcare, corrections, and criminal justice. These opportunities include bimonthly statewide meetings, quarterly corrections discharge planning trainings, and annual Illinois Reentry Conferences, engaging more than 250 individuals each year.

For more than twenty years, CRP has provided 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.

Conference sessions this year include:

- *Transgender & Gender-Diverse Care and Experiences While Incarcerated*, Opening Plenary by Channy Lynne Parker, Director of Strategic Relations, Howard Brown Health
- *Under the Rainbow: Complex Medical Care - Innovative Solutions for Trans Persons in Custody*, Afternoon Plenary by Dr. LaMenta Conway, Deputy Chief of Health Services, Illinois Department of Corrections
- *Utilizing Entrepreneurship and Personal Development Education to Build Inclusive Economies: An Overview of Defy Ventures*, by a team from Defy Ventures
- *Mapping Your Future: Facilitating Reentry Through the Use of the Education Justice Project's Illinois Reentry Guide* by a team from Education Justice Project at University of Illinois

- *Reimagining Reentry: Leveraging Existing Government Infrastructure to Meet the Needs of a Vulnerable Population* by Dr. Fredrick Echols, CEO, Cure Violence Global
- *Redefining Reentry: Incorporating Traditional and Non-Traditional Services for Bigger, Broader, and Better Support* by Avalon Betts-Gaston, Project Manager, Illinois Alliance for Reentry & Justice
- *Planting the Seeds of Recovery: Strategies for Substance Use Support Post-Incarceration* by Bryan Gooding, Program Manager - HIV Prevention, Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago
- *Medicare and Health Insurance Marketplace Coverage for Recently Released Individuals* by Brenda Delgado and Gregg McAllister, External Affairs Liaisons, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
- *Perspective: Building a Life and a Business Post-Release*, a personal story by Jimmie Williams, CEO, Urban Roots Inc.
- *Community Reentry Project Champion Award Presentation*

“What I love about this conference each year is the wide variety of voices – including people in government, in community organizations, and people with lived experience of incarceration and reentry,” says Cynthia Li, PHIMC Program Coordinator for Community Reentry Project and Healthy Chicago Equity Zones. “Working in reentry has really shown me the importance of listening and hearing. It’s powerful. People who participate in our conference tell us they’ve taken with them a new perspective on some aspect of their life or work, some idea they had not yet considered. They also leave with practical tools and resources to support reentry.”

A past participant shared, “I found the event incredibly useful. I was consistently learning new things throughout the day, some of which will serve as important context for my work and other things that will become integral to the structure of my project. I attribute that in large part to the wide variety of topics available to discuss in the breakout rooms. The transition between structural discussions and discussions on the science of HIV felt invaluable to me. I only wish there was time to join more of the breakout rooms!”

The 2023 Illinois Reentry Conference is funded by Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), and sponsored by ViiV Healthcare, HIV Care Connect, Illinois Public Health Association, and Indivior.

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***Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago (PHIMC)*** advances health justice and strengthens public health through innovation and partnerships that align people, strategies, and resources throughout 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 Cermak Health Services of Cook County and Transforming Reentry Services.