



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 14, the 2024 Illinois Reentry Conference: Advancing Criminal, Health, and Social Justice kicks off online at 10:00am CST. More than 200 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 and create space for conversations around health equity, social justice, and reentry services to support justice-involved individuals. This year's speakers will address topics such as parent-child relationships, helping undocumented clients, addressing sex offenses, identifying crisis, strategies for Black queer returning citizens, partnerships to address HIV/STIs, criminal legal reform, narrative change, and much more.

Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago (PHIMC), through its Community Reentry Project (CRP), hosts the Illinois Reentry Conference annually. Through partnerships with Cermak Health Services and Transforming Reentry Services, CRP provides HIV health education to approximately 2,000 detainees in the Cook County Department of Corrections, assists approximately 850 formerly incarcerated individuals with obtaining legal identification, and distributes approximately 9,000 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 quarterly statewide meetings, quarterly corrections discharge planning trainings, and annual Illinois Reentry Conferences, engaging more than 250 individuals each year.

Conference sessions this year include:

- *Hidden Trauma: The Impact of Incarceration on Family Reunification and Parent-Child Relationships*, Opening Plenary by Dr. Paviella Foster, President and Founder of SondR Consulting LLC
- *Innovative Strategies for the Successful Reintegration of Black Queer Returning Citizens and the Elevated Risk of HIV/STI Transmissions as a Result of Inadequate Access to Sexual Health Resources*, Afternoon Plenary by Vance White, Executive Director at School of Opulence
- *Helping Undocumented Clients Impacted by the Criminal Legal System Prepare for Possible Deportation with Education Justice Project's Deportation Guide, A New Path: A Guide to the Challenges and Opportunities After Deportation*, a breakout session offered by Lee Ragsdale and Xóchitl Adame Guerrero from Education Justice Project at University of Illinois

- *Sex Offense Civil Commitment: A Tool for Health? A Tool for Justice?*, a breakout session offered by Emma Peyton Williams with Free to Heal Collective, Paul Rothschild with Illinois Coalition to End Permanent Punishments, and Eric S. Janus with Sex Offense Litigation and Policy Resource Center
- *Identifying Crisis for Formerly Incarcerated People Once Returning Home*, a breakout session offered by Christiane Williams with Leading by Example-MS
- *Strengthening Equity in Reentry: Black & Brown Collaborative Partnerships to Address HIV/STIs & Social Determinants of Health*, a breakout session offered by Charlie Peterson with Neelyx Labs, Jerome Montgomery with Project VIDA, Michael Gaines with Illinois Department of Public Health, and Bryan Gooding with Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago
- *Advancing Public Health Through Criminal Legal System Reform*, a breakout session offered by Becky Levin with TASC, Inc., Jen Nagel-Fischer with The Porchlight Collective SAP, and Ben Ruddell with ACLU of Illinois
- *How to Offer Real Chances and Change the Narrative*, a breakout session offered by Candice Byrd and Vera Traver with YWCA McLean County
- *Breaking News and The Birthing*, Artistic Expressions by Peace Coleman and Olympia Chatman
- *Community Reentry Project Champion Award Presentation*

“Recognizing that some days we are wounded healers leaves an impact on so many lives. I believe this conference will not only impact the lives of community members, previously incarcerated individuals, but most of all, healers,” shared Dr. Paviella Foster, presenter for the Morning Plenary who serves as President and Founder of SondR Consulting LLC.

The 2024 Illinois Reentry Conference is funded by Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), and sponsored by ViiV Healthcare, HIV Care Connect, and Illinois Public Health Association.

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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. Through organizational development, systems transformation, fiscal management, and program implementation, PHIMC leads efforts to ensure systems are compassionate, affirming, and racially equitable, supporting health and well-being for all people.

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.