



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Monday, June 10, 2024

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

[DHS.Press@illinois.gov](mailto:DHS.Press@illinois.gov)

**New Initiative for Transgender and Gender-Diverse Wellness  
and Equity in Illinois**

*IDHS and PHIMC announce grantees in a new statewide initiative to expand  
lifesaving gender-affirming care*

CHICAGO—Today, the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) and the Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago (PHIMC) announced the launch of a new statewide initiative that supports and expands gender-affirming care.

The new Transgender and Gender Diverse (TGD) Wellness and Equity Program expands comprehensive and medically necessary care for transgender, gender-diverse, and LGBTQ+ people throughout Illinois. This program equips organizations that currently serve LGBTQ+ communities to increase their capacity to provide culturally- and medically-competent gender-affirming care.

This care will address social determinants of health, historical and contemporary trauma, and their unique impact on Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color who identify as transgender, gender-diverse, and other LGBTQ+ identities.

As part of a competitive grantmaking process, the following organizations were identified to participate:

- [Board of Trustees of Southern Illinois University](#) (Springfield)
- [Brave Space Alliance](#) (Chicago)
- [CALOR](#) (dba AIDS Healthcare Foundation) (Chicago)
- [Center on Halsted](#) (Chicago)
- [Centerstone](#) (West Frankfort)
- [Central Illinois Friends](#) (Peoria)
- [Champaign-Urbana Public Health District](#) (Champaign)
- [Chicago House and Social Service Agency](#) (Chicago)
- [Chicago Women's Health Center](#) (Chicago)
- [Douglas County Health Department](#) (Tuscola)

- [Legal Council for Health Justice](#) (Chicago)
- [Rainbow Café LGBT+ Center](#) (Carbondale)
- [School of Opulence](#) (Chicago)
- [The Project of the Quad Cities](#) (Moline)
- [Youth Outlook](#) (Naperville)

Through the TGD Wellness and Equity Program, these organizations will provide services that include:

- Training and behavioral health support
- Employing Healthcare Navigation Specialists
- Gender-affirming care training for staff
- Participation in a learning collaborative to share successes, challenges, and best practices
- Strategies to expand their medically- and culturally-appropriate gender-affirming care throughout their service areas

According to a 2022 survey from the Center for American Progress, more than one in five LGBTQ+ adults say they avoided care due to disrespect or discrimination from providers, growing to one in three for transgender and nonbinary respondents. To address this prejudice, this program equips these organizations with the tools needed to embrace differences and to provide care that affirms each individual's identity.

“IDHS is committed to meeting the people of Illinois where they most need empowerment. We are so proud to play a role in this programming for our gender-diverse community. Together with our partners, such as PHIMC and these grant recipients, we will counter stigma and provide equitable access to healthcare,” **said Dulce M. Quintero, IDHS Secretary Designate** – and the first out nonbinary person to lead a State agency in Illinois.

Through a competitive process, PHIMC was selected to serve as the lead organization for this initiative. With its longstanding history of addressing stigma and bias in healthcare settings, PHIMC's role includes facilitating a learning collaborative, providing training for affirming care, developing and curating outreach and education resources, and ensuring that community partners have what they need to meet their goals.

“Transgender, gender-diverse, and LGBTQ+ communities deserve to be treated with respect and dignity, and to receive care that affirms their identities. These are essential steps that help dismantle systemic discrimination, which has created inequitable access to healthcare,” **said Karen A. Reitan, PHIMC President and CEO**. “We are excited by the variety of work our partner organizations are doing in communities across the state. They are expanding staff and programming for behavioral health support, counseling, case management, hormone therapy, group therapy, art therapy, outreach, and education. Some are also providing health screenings and linkage to care for cancer, STIs, and HIV, knowing that people are more likely to engage in care while they are in an environment that affirms who they are.”

For more information on the participating organizations and the overall impact of this new program, visit [phimc.org/initiatives/tgd-wellness-and-equity-program](https://phimc.org/initiatives/tgd-wellness-and-equity-program).

**Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS)** is the State of Illinois' largest agency, with more than 14,000 employees. Illinois created IDHS in 1997, to provide our state's residents with streamlined access to integrated services—especially those who are seeking financial and housing independence in a healthy and safe environment. The mission of IDHS is to provide equitable access to social/human services, supports, programs, and resources to enhance the lives of all whom we serve.

**Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago (PHIMC)** advances health justice and strengthens public health through innovation and partnerships that align people, strategies, and resources. For thirty years, PHIMC has worked to build a strong, culturally-competent, and diverse public health workforce. This includes collaborating with providers, agencies, organizations, and individuals across Illinois to address bias and stigma that harm public health and to promote practices that improve client experiences and support comprehensive care.

###