

# 2025 ILLINOIS REENTRY CONFERENCE



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On March 13, 2025, Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago hosted the Illinois Reentry Conference in Chicago's Medical District at UIC Student Center West. This free conference brought together more than 200 justice-impacted individuals, their families, advocates, and professionals from various fields to promote health and healing through collaboration, education, and innovation. On March 12, a Pre-Conference Networking Mixer was held at PHIMC's partner organization Cara Collective, providing attendees with an opportunity to connect before the main conference, fostering meaningful discussions and connections to advance health equity for those affected by the criminal justice system.

Workshop presenters and plenary speakers shed light on the following important issues: identifying crisis for justice-impacted people once returning home, innovative pathways to decarceration, the value of social emotional learning, recovery housing as a catalyst for reentry success, how to offer real chances and change the narrative, and many other topics related to reentering communities after incarceration.

*"To sustain this work, we have to prioritize mutual aid, community care, and our own well-being. This means creating networks of support, sharing resources, and recognizing that rest is a revolutionary act in itself."*

- Jen Nagel-Fischer (she/they), Founder/Executive Director, The Porchlight Collective SAP, LLC

The opening plenary, Transforming Reentry: Building Pathways to Health, Stability, and Opportunity, was presented by Andre Peart (he/him), CEO and Founder of Untapped Solutions, now a global organization. In the afternoon, Vance White, Executive Director for School of Opulence, moderated a Plenary Panel - Breaking Barriers: Resource Deficiencies and their Impact on the Physical, Mental and Financial Health on People Who Are Justice-Impacted. Our performing creative artists were Anthony Spaulding, Derrick Loyd, and PBG Kemo. The day culminated in presentation of the Health Justice Legacy Award to Dr. Chad Zawitz, Divisional Chair of Correctional Health at the Cook County Jail, practicing at Cermak Health Services and Cook County Health, and the 2025 Community Reentry Champion Awards to Cindy Casey, Certified Recovery Support Specialist (CRSS) at Heritage Behavioral Health Center and Marketta Sims, Co-owner of 6ix-cess.

**Media Contact:** RoiAnn Phillips  
roiann.phillips@phimc.org (email)  
www.phimc.org (website)  
180 N. Michigan Ave, Suite 1200, Chicago IL 60601  
708.466.2560 (mobile)



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The Illinois Reentry Conference is more than just an event— it's a crucial step toward building a more just and equitable society. By bringing together justice-impacted individuals, advocates, and professionals, the conference fosters real solutions that support reentry, healing, and systemic change.

The overwhelming response and deep engagement from attendees prove that this work is both urgent and necessary. When we invest in reentry efforts, we're investing in stronger, healthier communities where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. Change starts with awareness, but it continues through action—this conference is a call for all of us to be part of that change. PHIMC's Community Reentry Manager and lead conference organizer Brittany Spralls closed the day with this: "Together, we can transform systems, uplift individuals, and work toward a future where health justice is a reality for all. Thank you for your participation, and let's continue this vital work, side by side."

The 2025 Illinois Reentry Conference was funded by Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), and sponsored by Quattro Business Support Services, HIV Care Connect, and Illinois Public Health Association.

Photos available [here](#).

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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.

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