



## 2026 Illinois Reentry Conference Call for Creative Artists

*Are you a creative artist passionate about Health Justice, Social Justice, or Wellness?*

*Do you want to share your talent and make an impact?*

*The Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago (PHIMC) is seeking innovative and socially conscious artists to showcase their work at the 2026 Illinois Reentry Conference!*

PHIMC's annual Illinois Reentry Conference brings together people who are justice-impacted, their families, their advocates, and professionals from medical and non-medical community-based and healthcare settings for a day of honest dialogue to transform the way we advocate for and work with people who are justice-impacted.

Promoting systems of health and healing for those impacted by the criminal justice system through Collaboration, Education, and Innovation, the Illinois Reentry Conference aims to advance Equity in Health Justice for people who are justice-impacted.

The event is free and open to the public, offering a platform for education and collaboration.

### What We're Looking For:

PHIMC invites creative artists with personal and/or professional lived experience to lead creative performances, showcases, or exhibits that explore the reentry experience and address dignity, healing, and comprehensive supports and opportunities around the reentry needs of people who are justice-impacted.

Your work should aim to inspire, raise awareness, and provide insights into the reentry process. We are particularly interested in creative artistic contributions that address:

#### **Youth and Emerging Adults' Reentry Experiences**

- **Lived Experience:** Provide insights and personal narratives that highlight the unique challenges and successes faced by youth and emerging adults during the reentry process.
- **Self-Advocacy:** Create engaging artistic expressions – such as visual art, spoken word, or performance – that effectively convey themes of resilience, hope, and community support in the context of youth and emerging adult reentry experiences.

## Identity and Self-Transformation

- **Personal Growth and Redemption:** Artists can depict the journey of self-discovery, redemption, and personal growth that individuals experience during and after incarceration. This could involve exploring themes of self-forgiveness, rebuilding one's identity, and transformation.
- **Stigma and Reintegration:** Visual or performance art can highlight the societal stigma faced by formerly incarcerated individuals and the emotional/psychological toll of reintegration. This might include storytelling around stereotypes, prejudice, and the struggle to rebuild one's reputation and relationships.

## Mental Health and Trauma

- **Impact of Incarceration on Mental Health:** Artists can explore the mental health challenges faced by justice-impacted individuals, such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, and feelings of isolation. Art installations or performances can symbolize the internal struggles and external pressures experienced by those reentering society.
- **Healing from Trauma:** Creative expressions can be used to depict the healing process, illustrating how individuals cope with past trauma, both during incarceration and after their release, through community support, therapy, and self-care.

## Community Support and Advocacy

- **Role of Community in Reentry:** Artists can showcase the critical role that community, family, and peer support play in helping formerly incarcerated individuals successfully reintegrate. This could include stories of mentorship, advocacy, and community-based reentry programs that provide essential services like housing, employment, and mental health support.
- **Grassroots Movements and Activism:** Art can reflect the grassroots movements aimed at criminal justice reform, including initiatives that support the rights of formerly incarcerated individuals. This can inspire activism and solidarity.

## Restorative Justice and Rebuilding Relationships

- **Restorative Justice Practices:** Artists can explore the concept of restorative justice, focusing on reconciliation between formerly incarcerated individuals and the community. This might include narratives of healing between victims, offenders, and society as a whole.
- **Reconnecting with Family:** Family reconnection can be a powerful theme, as artists depict the emotional struggles and joys of reestablishing relationships with family members, particularly children, after long periods of incarceration.

## Employment, Education, and Economic Challenges

- **Barriers to Employment and Education:** Through photography, film, or visual art, artists can showcase the barriers that formerly incarcerated individuals face in finding employment and continuing their education, often due to legal and social discrimination.

- **Rebuilding Economic Independence:** Artwork could focus on the journey toward economic independence and entrepreneurship for formerly incarcerated people, celebrating those who have successfully navigated the challenges of rebuilding their lives.

### Health Disparities and Access to Care

- **Healthcare After Incarceration:** Artists can address the lack of access to physical and mental healthcare for reentering individuals. This can include stories about untreated illnesses, the challenges in continuity of care post-incarceration, and the importance of comprehensive healthcare – including HIV care, mental health, and substance use treatment – for reentry success.
- **Public Health and Social Determinants of Health:** Artwork can reflect how social determinants of health, such as housing, education, and access to nutritious food, impact the reentry process and contribute to health inequities among formerly incarcerated individuals.

### Housing and Homelessness

- **Housing Instability:** Through visual narratives or performance, artists can highlight the housing challenges faced by individuals reentering society, including the cycle of homelessness that many experience due to legal restrictions, financial difficulties, and the stigma associated with a criminal record.
- **Housing as a Human Right:** Art can advocate for housing as a fundamental human right and call for reforms to ensure that formerly incarcerated individuals have access to stable and supportive housing environments.

### Intersectionality

- **LGBTQ+ Populations in Reentry:** Artists can focus on the unique challenges faced by specific groups, such as justice-impacted LGBTQ+, transgender, and gender-diverse individuals, whose experiences with reentry often involve additional layers of discrimination and hardship. Creative expression could involve themes of intersectionality, exploring how gender, sexual orientation, race, and class affect the reentry process.
- **Women Population in Reentry:** Artists can focus on the unique challenges faced by justice-impacted women, whose experiences with reentry often involve additional layers of discrimination and hardship. Creative expressions could involve themes of intersectionality, exploring how gender, sexual orientation, race, and class affect the reentry process.

### Reentry Success Stories and Resilience

- **Stories of Success and Resilience:** Highlight stories of formerly incarcerated individuals who have overcome obstacles, demonstrating resilience, strength, and the ability to thrive post-incarceration. This can include individuals who have become advocates, leaders, or entrepreneurs.
- **Empowerment:** Explore how storytelling can be a form of reentry support, where justice-impacted people share their stories, empowering themselves and inspiring others.

### Collaborative and Participatory Art

- **Community Art Projects:** Participatory art projects, such as murals, public sculptures, or collaborative installations, can engage formerly incarcerated individuals, artists, and the community to create art together. This fosters collaboration, community healing, and inclusion, while bringing attention to reentry issues.
- **Interactive Exhibits:** Artists can develop interactive installations that allow audiences to experience aspects of the reentry journey firsthand, fostering empathy and understanding of the challenges faced by those returning to society.

### Why You Should Participate:

**Inspire Action:** Use your art to influence and inspire public health professionals, social service providers, and community members to create positive change.

**Network with Leaders:** Connect with advocates and professionals dedicated to improving the reentry experience for individuals in Illinois.

**Create Impact:** Showcase your artistic vision and provide meaningful contributions that will leave a lasting impression on attendees.

### Creative Artist Submission Information:

**Submission Deadline: November 7, 2025**

**Conference Date: March 12, 2026**

Join PHIMC in building a transformative path to healthy futures for people who are justice-impacted and their families. By sharing your creative expression, you can make a significant impact on the conversations surrounding reentry from incarceration. Use your artistic talent to educate, inspire, and advocate for meaningful change in the lives of justice-impacted individuals.

For more information or if you have questions, contact us at [reentry@phimc.org](mailto:reentry@phimc.org).

Let's work together to promote health justice and support building healthier communities through the power of art!