

ILLINOIS REENTRY CONFERENCE

COLLABORATION, EDUCATION, AND INNOVATION



2026 Illinois Reentry Conference Call for Workshop Presenters

Do you have expertise in Health Justice, Correctional Healthcare, or Social Justice?

Are you passionate about sharing your knowledge and making an impact?

The Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago (PHIMC) is seeking workshop presenters for the 2026 Illinois Reentry Conference!

PHIMC invites individuals with lived experience of incarceration, representatives from community-based organizations, and professionals from both clinical and non-clinical settings—as well as other allies and advocates—to lead workshops that offer valuable insights and practical tools to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and transform systems to support people who are justice-impacted. We encourage contributions that explore both the opportunities and barriers in the reentry process and in accessing services for people impacted by incarceration.

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. Workshops are designed to address dignity, healing, and provide comprehensive support and opportunities around the reentry needs of 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 people from the community with lived experience of incarceration, representatives of community-based organizations, and non-medical and medical entities to lead workshops that offer valuable insights and practical tools that raise awareness, reduce stigma, and transform systems to support people who are justice-impacted.

Your contribution should highlight the opportunities and barriers surrounding the reentry process and services for people who were formerly incarcerated. This year's sessions will cover:

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:** Facilitate engaging workshops – such as presentations on self-advocacy, overcoming challenges, and building support networks – that effectively convey the 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:** Focus on the journey of self-discovery, redemption, and personal growth that individuals experience during and after incarceration. This could involve exploring themes such as self-forgiveness, rebuilding one's identity, and transformation through discussions, workshops, and activities that promote reflection and healing.
- **Stigma and Reintegration:** Focus on highlighting the societal stigma faced by formerly incarcerated individuals and the emotional/psychological toll of reintegration. Workshops could include discussions on stereotypes, prejudice, and the challenges of rebuilding one's reputation and relationships.

Mental Health and Trauma

- **Impact of Incarceration:** Explore the mental health challenges faced by justice-impacted individuals, such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, and feelings of isolation. Workshops can address the internal struggles and external pressures experienced by those reentering society.
- **Healing from Trauma:** Explore 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:** Showcase the critical role that community, family, and peer support play in helping formerly incarcerated individuals successfully reintegrate. Workshops could include discussions on mentorship, advocacy, and community-based reentry programs that provide essential services like housing, employment, and mental health support.
- **Grassroots Movements and Activism:** Highlight 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:** Explore the concept of restorative justice, focusing on reconciliation between formerly incarcerated individuals and the community. Workshops might include discussions on healing narratives involving victims, offenders, and society as a whole.
- **Reconnecting with Family:** Focus on family reconnection as a powerful theme, exploring 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:** Highlight the barriers that formerly incarcerated individuals face in finding employment and continuing their education, often due to legal and social discrimination.
- **Rebuilding Economic Independence:** Focus on the journey toward economic independence and entrepreneurship for formerly incarcerated individuals, celebrating those who have successfully navigated the challenges of rebuilding their lives.

Health Disparities and Access to Care

- **Healthcare After Incarceration:** Address the lack of access to physical and mental healthcare for reentering individuals. Presentations can include discussions on untreated illnesses, the challenges of 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:** Explore how social determinants of health, such as housing, education, and access to nutritious food, impact the reentry process and contribute to health inequities among incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals.

Housing and Homelessness

- **Housing Instability:** 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:** Highlight housing advocacy as a fundamental human right and emphasize the need for reforms to ensure that formerly incarcerated individuals have access to stable and supportive housing environments.

Intersectionality

- **LGBTQ+ Populations in Reentry:** Highlight 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. Workshops could involve themes of intersectionality, exploring how gender, sexual orientation, race, and class affect the reentry process.
- **Women Population in Reentry:** Highlight the unique challenges faced by justice-impacted women, whose experiences with reentry often involve additional layers of discrimination and hardship. Workshops could involve themes of intersectionality, exploring gender, sexual orientation, race, and class.

Reentry Success Stories and Resilience

- **Stories of Success and Resilience:** Highlight stories of justice-impacted people who have overcome obstacles, demonstrating resilience, strength, and the ability to thrive post-incarceration.

- **Empowerment:** Explore how storytelling can be a form of reentry support, where justice-impacted people share their stories, empowering themselves and inspiring others.

Why You Should Participate:

Inspire Action: Share your expertise and inspire public health professionals, social service providers, and community members to create meaningful change.

Network with Leaders with Lived Experience: Connect with professionals and advocates working to improve the reentry experience for individuals in Illinois.

Create Impact: Provide attendees with actionable strategies and tools that can be applied to support reentry efforts across the state of Illinois.

Workshop Presenter Submission Information:

Submission Deadline: November 7, 2025

Conference Date: March 12, 2026

Join us in building a brighter future for people who are justice impacted and their families by sharing your expertise, creativity, and passion at the Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago's 2026 Illinois Reentry Conference.

For more information or if you have questions, contact us at reentry@phimc.org.

Let's work together to promote health justice and support our communities!