



## Improving health, health equity and quality of life for people and communities

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### Eleven Illinois Community Organizations Receive Funds to Plan for Medical Respite Care Programs to Serve People Experiencing Homelessness Who Are Recovering from Illness or Injury

**Chicago, Illinois** – The Illinois Public Health Institute (IPHI) announced today that it is funding eleven community organizations in Illinois to increase access to medical respite care services for people experiencing homelessness. Medical respite care is acute and post-acute care for people experiencing homelessness who are too ill or frail to recover from an illness or injury on the streets or in a shelter, but who do not require hospital-level care. Medical respite is short-term housing combined with health services that allows individuals experiencing homelessness the opportunity to rest, recover, and heal in a safe environment while accessing medical care and other supportive services.

The initiative is funded as part of the State of Illinois' [Home Illinois, Illinois' Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness](#).

The organizations that are receiving funding are:

- The Boulevard – Chicago, IL
- Christian Community Health Center – Chicago, IL
- Franciscan Outreach – Chicago, IL
- HeartlandHOUSED – Sangamon County/Springfield, IL
- Housing Forward – Maywood, IL
- PADS Lake County – Waukegan, IL
- Phoenix Community Development Services – Peoria, IL
- Project NOW -- Rock Island, IL
- Respond NOW – Chicago Heights, IL
- City of Rockford Department of Health and Human Services – Rockford, IL
- Sarah's Circle – Chicago, IL

“There are very limited medical respite options for people experiencing homelessness in Illinois,” said Elissa Bassler, CEO of IPHI. “After being discharged from a hospital, it is extremely difficult to recover from illness and injury on the streets or in a shelter, so there is no doubt that expanding access to medical respite will save lives and is crucial to advancing health equity in Illinois. We are thrilled to partner with IDHS and these eleven organizations to expand access to medical respite services in communities across Illinois.”

Since 2017, IPHI's work with the Alliance for Health Equity has included a focus on the health needs of people experiencing homelessness. During the first year of the COVID pandemic, IPHI and its government, community clinic, hospital, and homeless shelter partners learned many lessons about providing health care to acutely ill people dependent on the homeless shelter system. This medical respite initiative grows out of and will build on those experiences.

Robert Simpson, the Executive Director of Franciscan Outreach, a homeless shelter on Chicago's West Side, said “We see so many people with health needs we aren't equipped to handle. Without a medical respite program, we struggle to help clients with acute health needs, such as post-surgical care or IV medications. This funding

will help us rally partners in the Illinois Medical District to design a medical respite program that is desperately needed in our community.”

In addition to providing funding for planning or expansion, IPHI is working with the National Institute for Medical Respite Care (NIMRC), a project of the National Healthcare for the Homeless Council, to provide technical assistance to each funded group, as well as manage a learning collaborative to support further capacity building and peer sharing and learning.

“At the core of medical respite care is the philosophy that “housing is health care,” and every person deserves an opportunity to recover safely from acute medical events. With the significant lack of affordable housing, medical respite programs provide dignity in the healing process while also meeting basic needs. It is innovative for Illinois to invest in the development of high-quality medical respite services across the state. It demonstrates a commitment to the health and safety of all Illinoisans, regardless of housing status,” said Julia Dobbins, Director of Programs and Services at NIMRC.

Angie Walker, Homeless Program Coordinator for the City of Rockford Health and Human Services Department, shared that “Rockford Health and Human Services is very excited to be chosen for this project. We have been discussing the need for medical respite in Rockford for a little over a year and this funding, along with the technical assistance and learning opportunities, is a big boost to our work. We are currently serving 187 individuals and families experiencing literal homelessness in Rockford, and this will enable us to strengthen our services to our clients.”

Christine Haley, Illinois Chief Homelessness Officer, who leads the state’s work on the *Home Illinois Plan*,” said “We are proud to partner with IPHI, NIMRC and the agencies funded through this initiative. When persons experiencing homelessness leave an in-patient hospital stay, they need a safe, comfortable, and healing place to recover. We are excited about the potential to expand this vital service statewide through these capacity building grants.

This initial phase of the program is slated to run through June 30, 2023; and will support the agencies to bring together partners and develop a plan for medical respite in the communities they serve.

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