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## **PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTE OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO ANNOUNCES ‘POP CAMPAIGN’**

Protecting Our Patients (POP) Pilot uses Innovative ‘Champion Model’ to Successfully Reduce Stigmas in Health Care

Chicago, November 2016 — Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago (PHIMC) announces their Protecting Our Patients initiative, or POP Campaign, created to mobilize health care teams to reduce stigmas that hinder healthy patient outcomes. PHIMC, with its 22-year history of partnering with individuals and organizations to develop, implement and direct life-changing public health programs, is tackling a critical health challenge with the POP Campaign. The campaign, designed to promote practices that improve patient experiences, has successfully launched in eight pilot sites throughout Chicagoland hospitals and clinics and is now ready for implementation on a larger scale.

Funded by Illinois Department of Public Health through a project with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, POP was created from a need to ensure that the entire health care team, from receptionist to physician, provides each patient with comprehensive care and a positive experience, without social stigmas. The campaign uses an innovative model that features stories from real individuals to empower health care champions as heroes within their practices. Armed with necessary tools, from training materials to peer support to communications strategies, champions are primed to mobilize action across their entire health care team. The champions promote best practices by leading their peers in understanding stigma and their responsibility to reduce it, while facilitating opportunities to keep the conversation and campaign alive.

The POP Campaign is currently implementing two initiatives: ***integrating routine HIV screenings*** into general health care and providing ***affirming health care*** for all, especially those most marginalized from healthcare systems.

The first initiative, *Routine HIV Screening*, promotes the CDC’s recommendation that everyone 13-64 years old be tested for HIV as part of general health screenings. By integrating HIV screenings into routine health care visits, clinics can increase the number of individuals who are diagnosed early, reduce stigma surrounding the disease, and effectively link patients to care and services. Starting HIV treatment early prolongs the health of an individual living with HIV

and reduces the risk of transmission by 96%. Early diagnosis means not progressing to AIDS and gives the individual the ability to live a long and healthy life.

“After nine years working to integrate HIV screening into general medical settings, PHIMC recognizes that health professionals face personal barriers that prevent them from fully implementing this standard of care, including discomfort, confusion, inexperience, disbelief, and blaming,” says Karen A. Reitan, PHIMC Executive Director. “This barrier provides a great disservice to the 18% of individuals in the U.S. living with HIV who are unaware of their status and the 50% of the U.S. population who has never been tested.”

POP’s second initiative, *Affirming Health Care*, promotes collaborative health care relationships across the entire health care team where patients feel comfortable accessing services and discussing their personal health needs, especially members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) community and patients of color, who are most marginalized from health systems. While not a new concept, this approach is not as widely practiced as it should be. An astounding 24% of transgender adults have been refused care in a doctor’s office. The goal of Affirming Health Care is to cultivate a comfortable environment where patients receive quality care without stigma or judgment, leading to an increase in patient satisfaction, better adherence to treatment recommendations, and improved health outcomes.

“We can transform our institutions to serve every patient with the same, welcoming care that we expect ourselves,” says Dr. Robert Saqueton, Medical Director of Lake County Health Department. “Affirming care leaves patients with a more positive impression and can lead to higher patient satisfaction and retention in care.”

PHIMC is currently piloting the two POP initiatives by integrating them into eight organizations and clinics across Illinois. Initial pilot program evaluations by independent researchers, Beth-Anne Jacob, PhD, from University of Chicago and Suzanne Carlberg-Racich, PhD from DePaul University have proven that the two initiatives are, in fact, effective in changing perceptions and reducing stigmas amongst healthcare providers.

The study results revealed that the POP Campaign allowed participants to become aware of issues that interfere with providing affirming care. The innovative Champion-lead method showed its efficacy in reducing provider-level stigma and judgment toward LGBT patients of color. The POP Campaign is changing perceptions, and thus, practice, allowing participating Illinois healthcare systems to lead the way in providing the highest level of care to all patients.

### **About PHIMC**

Founded in 1994, Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago (PHIMC) enhances the capacity of public health and health care systems to promote health equity and expand access to services. Through organizational development, system transformation, fiscal management, and program implementation, PHIMC leads efforts to strengthen public health infrastructure in Illinois. To learn more, visit: [www.PHIMC.org](http://www.PHIMC.org)