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Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services Announces Equity-Centric Healthcare Transformation Plan

*Department to work with legislators, community partners to build a
healthcare system that better serves all Illinois residents*

Springfield– Building on Governor Pritzker’s renewal of the Hospital Assessment Program earlier this year, the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) today unveiled a new equity-centric healthcare plan that addresses the social and structural determinants of health. The department partnered with the University of Illinois at Chicago’s School of Public Health and the Institute for Healthcare Delivery Design to conduct extensive statewide community listening and in-depth research to create the plan which presents a major shift in providing healthcare delivery. [View the proposed plan \(PDF\)](#) on the HFS website.

“As we continue to address the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring equitable healthcare access and delivery is more important than ever, especially in Black and Brown communities and for Illinois residents who are uninsured or underinsured,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “Under this newly released plan, my administration will work with our partners in the General Assembly to establish a system where all Illinoisans, regardless of their background or where they live, receive the quality care they deserve.”

In developing the plan, HFS researchers worked with community organizations to reach some of Illinois’ most distressed communities. Community members shared stories of historic, cultural, economic, and logistical barriers to healthcare that exposed a serious disconnect between the care people needed and the care they received.

“It’s time we looked beyond the four walls of a hospital or doctor’s office and reorient the entire system around people and communities. We need to reimagine care delivery and focus on what it takes to truly improve health and wellness for the most vulnerable Illinois residents,” said **Theresa Eagleson, Director of HFS**. “Public policy and funding should focus more on integration of services and social factors that have the greatest impact on individuals and communities, in addition to inpatient hospital care or specific providers. We are proud of the framework our research and initial planning

brings to the conversations about healthcare transformation in Illinois and we look forward to working with legislators in the general assembly to improve and finalize these ideas with their input and feedback.”

If implemented, the new HFS plan will fund pilot projects and planning grants to address both healthcare and social determinants of health, emphasize collaboration with community-based organizations plus one unrelated healthcare provider, and ensure that health equity is a measurable, primary focus of each project.

“I want to make sure that we approach the community with ideas to deal with the social determinants of health for not just a healthy person but a healthy community,” said **Apostle Dr. Carl L. White, Jr., President and CEO of Southland Ministerial Health Network**, a community partner during the plan’s research phase. “We need to pull together a team of people to turn our communities around, where the community is involved in the planning and solution. I’m with this plan, I love what I’m hearing, and I’m excited about the focus on the social determinants of health and this upstream, community-based approach.”

Pilots would fall into one of three collaboration categories: Cross-provider partnerships, safety net hospital partnerships, and critical access or distressed hospital partnerships. They would be monitored and analyzed, and those with successful outcomes would advance into larger healthcare transformation projects with additional funding schedules and benchmarks.

“I think it is important that the Department of Healthcare & Family Services is looking at health outcomes and health disparities in its vision for healthcare transformation,” said **Representative Camille Y. Lilly**. “I look forward to working with a final plan which addresses healthier communities and the quality of life for the citizens of Illinois.”

“We need to use an equity lens and take a fresh look at healthcare in our under-served communities,” said **State Senator Mattie Hunter**. “I look forward to working with my colleagues to invest in these necessary transformation projects not only to level the playing field, but to create a culturally competent workforce of people who’ve faced their implicit biases and are ready to serve their communities.”

Pending feedback and input from the General Assembly, the proposed funding mix would begin with an annual pool of \$150 million to start a realignment of state resources. The plan recommends coordinating projects with other sources of funding from other state agencies, the business community, and the philanthropic community to spur broad investment in community projects that have a coordinated, comprehensive approach to improving community health.

“If there’s anything I’ve learned from my mother, a community hospital nurse, and my own career in healthcare, it’s that quality outcomes matter so much more than measures of activity,” said **State Senator Ann Gillespie**. “I’m interested in watching how this plan moves forward in terms of getting better outcomes for our communities, rather than simply trying to do more of the same.”

To view and download the Healthcare Transformation Plan, visit (PDF):
<https://www.illinois.gov/hfs/SiteCollectionDocuments/HFSHealthcareTransformationProposal.pdf>.

To view an executive summary, visit (PDF):
<https://www.illinois.gov/hfs/SiteCollectionDocuments/HFSHealthcareTransformationExecutiveSummary.pdf>

Members of the media interested in sources for this story can email evan.d.fazio@illinois.gov to request an interview with HFS Director Eagleson or to schedule a call with a participant from the community-based research.

Stories from community research

Examples of stories from community members that informed the agency's healthcare transformation plan include:

To watch LaKeya's story, visit <https://vimeo.com/464259465>

- A currently disabled, former bookkeeper, abuse survivor, wife, sister, mother, grandmother, living with bipolar disorder on Chicago's West Side said: *"My psych doctor went into adolescent psychiatry so I was transferred to another psych doctor. **I was just handed over to her. She didn't really read my background or get to know me.** I saw a new medication for bipolar on TV and I was interested in trying it because it said you don't gain weight with it. I mentioned it to her...and her attitude was like, 'you're gonna take what I tell you to take.' I didn't like that.... I want to be included in conversations about what I take and what goes into my body."*
- A short haul trucker, divorced single dad to two young boys who struggles balancing work and childcare, concerned about his sedentary lifestyle, eating habits, with type 2 diabetes in the East St. Louis metro area: *"A couple of years ago, I wanted to go out for the Police Academy and I wanted to get into better shape. **My doctor told me to just eat a well-balanced diet. When I asked her about what that is, she told me to Google it. So I paid \$30 copay for that.** I do struggle to find information about just a well-balanced diet for regular people. A lot of the stuff I see is for people who are super-athletes and what they should eat. I just want to know what to eat that's healthy for a regular person."*