

# MolinaCares in Illinois newsletter

## June 2024 Edition

### **Welcome from Plan President Matt Wolf**

Welcome back to the Molina Healthcare of Illinois (Molina) newsletter! The past few months, our team has been engaging with local leaders and advocates to host events that strengthen community bonds and empower Illinoisians with resources to improve their health and well-being. We have been focusing on advancing health equity and addressing the social determinants of health that affect many of our members and neighbors.



During Black Maternal Health Week, I was proud to participate in a *Health News Illinois* panel on maternal and infant health. Alongside my esteemed panelists, we had a constructive dialogue on innovative solutions and continuing efforts to address the maternal health crisis. In Illinois, **14%** of expectant mothers face inadequate prenatal care, and disproportionately high rates of **maternal morbidity and mortality** persist among Black birthing individuals.

In support of local mothers, Molina also hosted events in Rockford and Waukegan where we partnered with **Erie Family Health Centers** and **FAB Fitness & Health Academy** to provide self-care and mental health resources.

In celebration of Older Americans Month, we sponsored and participated in several events focused on improving health outcomes for seniors, including the Release the Silence Conference, which helped individuals and caregivers navigate Alzheimer's, and the Orland Park Senior Expo, which offered seniors and their families critical health information.

Lastly, I am excited to share our **Why We Serve** campaign, featuring personal testimonials from Molina employees who are dedicated to the health of our members and our communities. I am honored to work alongside them daily.

I encourage you to read on for more information about our efforts to serve those in our community.

Matt Wolf  
Plan President  
Molina Healthcare of Illinois

## [Health News Illinois Panel](#)

On April 16, Molina Plan President Matt Wolf participated in a [Health News Illinois](#) panel entitled “Examining Illinois’ Maternal Health Crisis.” Participants included Illinois Department of Public Health Director Dr. Sameer Vohra, Sinai Chicago’s CEO Dr. Ngozi Ezike, Chicago South Side Birth Center Founder Jeanine Valrie Logan, and Erie Family Health Centers’ Medical Director of Reproductive Health Dr. Tracy Irwin.

The panelists discussed the maternal and infant health crisis in Illinois and approaches to driving towards health equity in access to care and outcomes. Panelists agreed that given the unique challenges facing each community, a one-size-fits-all approach to maternal health is not the best way to improve maternal and infant health. While there is still work to be done to address equity in care here in Illinois, it’s clear that together, we can meet the needs of under-resourced individuals in our community.

Learn more about the panel [here](#).



## [Third Annual Easter Eggstravaganza](#)

At the end of March, Molina partnered with [Hope Fellowship Church of Rockford](#), [New Zion Baptist Church](#), [Northwest Community Center](#), and [Love and Loyalty M.C.](#) to host the third annual Easter Eggstravaganza event, distributing 500 Easter baskets to Rockford residents. At the event, participants gathered to enjoy free food, photo opportunities with the Easter Bunny, a live DJ, an Easter egg hunt, and a raffle. Molina representatives were on-site to distribute important information on high blood pressure and cholesterol, breast cancer, asthma, diabetes, and more.

Heart disease, cancer, and diabetes are all [within the top 10 causes of death](#) here in Illinois. Molina is partnering with community and faith-based organizations in areas that have a high prevalence of these conditions to provide targeted outreach and education around prevention, services and treatment options to improve equity in health information and agency in navigating care.



## [Why We Serve Illinois](#)

At Molina, we are dedicated to serving our members and providing the best possible care that improves Illinoisians' health and lives. We are lucky to have a team that is incredibly passionate about meeting each member's unique needs in the pursuit of building stronger communities across our state.

Our Why We Serve campaign highlights the personal stories of some of our team members who go above and beyond to find innovative ways to improve health outcomes and health care experience for our members. Be sure to check our stories from Molina case managers, specialists, and other staff who help us go the extra mile to provide excellent care throughout Illinois.

[Learn more](#) about the Why We Serve campaign.

*#WhyWeServe*

## [Reading with Molina](#)

Over the past few months, we continued our partnership with [WSIU](#) to host 'Reading with Molina' events throughout our state. Our last two events were held at [Jacksonville Public Library](#) and [Rochester Public Library](#), where attendees enjoyed story time, themed activities, and crafts. Additionally, Molina provided every child in attendance with a free book and activity to take home, along with a sticker for attending the event.

Equity starts with education. Through these reading events, we hope to instill a love of reading at an early age while also educating and empowering attendees with information that leads to long-

term achievement. At the Rochester event, for example, the librarian read books to the children and their guardians about body positivity.

[Research shows](#) that low literacy and language skills are associated with lower educational achievement and long-term behavioral and social problems.



## [PBS Family Fun Days](#)

As a part of our youth educational programming, Molina Healthcare of Illinois partnered with PBS KIDS ([WSIU](#)) to host 'Downunder' Family Fun Days in Mt. Vernon, Quincy, and Springfield.

Those who attended these family-friendly events enjoyed a photo opportunity with Malik from PBS' Work It Out Wombats, food, and animal-themed arts and crafts activities. Molina will be hosting more Family Fun Days in the coming months to continue building community amongst local families and foster a love of learning in children.

## [Record Expungement Events](#)

As a part of Molina's equity initiative, we are engaging with organizations like Social Change to change the narrative around incarceration and recidivism that contribute to reoccurring disparities among the justice-involved population and provide the tools necessary to break down barriers to better health.

This spring, Molina partnered with [Social Change](#) to host expungement summits in Peoria and Rockford where attendees can benefit from free legal aid on record sealing. A criminal record and the stigma associated with it can [prevent](#) one from securing stable employment, housing, education, and other opportunities that are [connected](#) to health outcomes. In Illinois, only [10% of people](#) with conviction records eligible for sealing have received it. Molina employees were also on-site at the events to answer questions and assist individuals with Medicaid redetermination.

## [Black Family Wellness Expo Event](#)

Molina was proud to partner with [The Tri-County \(IL\) Chapter of the Links, Inc.](#) and [Springfield Clinic](#) to host the Black Family Wellness Expo. The event took place at the Boys and Girls Club in Springfield, where more than 120 attendees and ten agencies showcased vital health care and social determinants of health resources to promote holistic wellness, quality of life and health outcomes within the Black community. Molina's mobile health unit was also on-site to provide flu shots, wellness exams and other health screenings for families. We also distributed fresh produce and books for children.



## [Orland Park Senior Expo](#)

In April, Molina collaborated with [Senior Expo USA](#) to sponsor the Orland Park/Orland Hill Senior Expo. The event brought together community organizations and providers to offer seniors and caregivers connections to health information, resources and basic needs. In addition to the sponsorship, Molina employees were on-site to hand out information on diabetes, asthma, lead poisoning, and high blood pressure as well as 200 laundry bags and 100 pill boxes. Additionally, those who attended enjoyed activities, entertainment, and refreshments, free of cost. Over 600 seniors joined us that day!

According to the [CDC](#), seniors in Cook County have reported being less up-to-date with preventive health screenings and services than the national average. Through events such as this one, we hope to empower seniors and their caregivers with the tools necessary to improve health outcomes by prioritizing preventive care. We are committed to providing our elderly community members with the resources they need to live healthy, happy lives and look forward to ongoing engagement with our senior population.

## [Seasoned Circle Café Senior Center Monthly Bingo](#)

In an effort to further support our elders, we teamed up with [Seasoned Circle Cafe](#) to host a monthly bingo and a resource fair. Along with a fun morning of games, attendees had access to health screenings and community resources. The Seasoned Circle Café – part of the Congregate Meal Site Program, serves

breakfast and lunch every weekday, offering seniors a nutritious meal and an opportunity for socialization.

Events like this one foster community and combat loneliness and isolation, which have been proven to result in a nearly [50%](#) increase in risk of dementia.

## [Release the Silence Conference](#)

As a part of our health equity efforts, Molina Healthcare of Illinois partnered with the [Alzheimer's Association](#) to host the Inaugural African American Conference: [Release the Silence](#) in Springfield in May. Participants heard from experts on how to better navigate the health care, financial and legal realms of Alzheimer's and dementia care with a focus on addressing the disparities in care for African Americans in Illinois. African Americans are [two times](#) more likely to have Alzheimer's and other dementias compared to white Americans.

Speakers also provided insight into strategies to address the strain on caregivers. Navigating the Alzheimer's journey is complicated and stressful, even for caregivers. Providing respite and resources for our caregivers is critical for their well-being, but [66%](#) of caregivers report difficulty finding resources and support for their needs.



## [Observing Mother's Day and Mental Health Awareness Month](#)

Molina hosted two Mother's Day events in May to celebrate and give thanks to mothers who do so much for their families. Our first event was in partnership with the [Erie Family Health Centers](#) where mothers had the opportunity to engage in a floral arrangement demo, enjoy a healthy meal, and receive health and self-care information. This celebration was centered around mental health, providing mothers with a chance to focus on themselves.

A few days later, we partnered with [FAB Dance & Fitness Academy](#) to host the third annual Health is Wealth Mother's Day luncheon at the Riverfront Museum Park. Attendees enjoyed lunch and a raffle, as

well as an educational discussion on women’s mental and physical health from two incredible speakers, Tamika Brown, a holistic trauma therapist, and Fabbie Williams, owner of FAB Dance & Fitness Academy. Each year, **1 in 5** women in the United States experience a mental illness like depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, or an eating disorder.

## Supporting Rosalind Franklin University’s Interprofessional Community Clinic

In early May, Molina Healthcare of Illinois presented a \$40,000 grant to **Rosalind Franklin University** in support of their **Interprofessional Community Clinic (ICC)**, a student-led clinic for lower-income, uninsured individuals in Lake County. Services are offered free of charge. The grant will go toward crucial vaccinations, interpretation services to promote cultural sensitivity, and new computers to expand telemedicine services.



Most importantly, this investment will allow the ICC to continue serving free care for lower-income patients in Lake County who often experience disproportionate rates of chronic disease and provide excellent training for future health care practitioners. We are inspired by the clinic’s unwavering commitment to providing uninsured neighbors with accessible, quality health care.

Learn more about our partnership with Rosalind Franklin University [here](#).

## Women’s Health Event

On May 18, Molina Healthcare of Illinois collaborated with **Equal Hope, Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science, City of Hope, Erie Family Health Centers,** and **Roberti Community House** to host a Women’s Health event in Lake County. Attendees received free health screenings, community resources, and refreshments free of charge. This engagement was built upon our **recent grant** to Rosalind Franklin University’s Interprofessional Community Clinic to **expand** preventative care to more patients across Lake County.

Prioritizing preventable care is critically important to addressing chronic conditions such as hypertension, a diagnosis that [nearly 40% of women](#) ages 18 and older suffer from. Receipt of preventive services is associated with [reduced](#) morbidity and mortality. Alongside fellow community-based organizations, we are committed to improving access to this critical care across our state.

## [Hispanic Health Festival](#)

Culturally competence is a tool to minimize disparities in health. At Molina, we are also implementing culturally competent practices to achieve equity in care and health starting with the most basic of needs – food.

On Saturday, May 11, Molina Healthcare of Illinois partnered with [SIHF Healthcare](#) and [The Latino Roundtable of Southwestern Illinois](#) to host a Hispanic Health Festival for the Latino community in Fairmont City and surrounding communities. We provided over 150 families with 400 bags of food containing Hispanic pantry staples and fresh vegetables, like beans, rice, tortillas, jalapenos, bell peppers, tomatoes and chili peppers, to incorporate their meal and ingredient choices into healthier eating habits and help pay for the cost of food that may be a barrier to care.

The event was filled with a fiesta atmosphere with folk Panamanian and Mexican dancers for entertainment where many families joined in to dance along! The attendees could also receive valuable community resources, health screenings, and haircuts.

According to the most recent data, the patient to primary care physician rate in St. Clair County is [1,593 to 1](#). Additionally, the food insecurity rate among the Latino population in the county is [20%](#). By integrating wraparound care into cultural events like this one, we hope to improve health outcomes for under-resourced populations in our state.

## [Exhibiting at Leyden Township Community Health Fair](#)

Molina participated in the second annual Leyden Township Community Health Fair as an exhibitor. Open to the public, this one-stop-shop event brought community resources and services to the community.

Participants also had access to vaccinations, colon health kits, diabetic eye exams, HIV testing, kids' activities, mini health seminars, and much more. Additionally, the Illinois Secretary of State Division of Motor Vehicles Services was on-site to provide eligible driver's license, ID renewal services, and real IDs to attendees.



## Molina Mobile Units

The Molina Mobile Units are continuing to make their way across the state to not only address health disparities but more importantly, advance health equity. We are making stops in neighborhoods that are experiencing health care deserts or higher rates of health conditions. Our more recent visits were to the communities of Springfield, Peoria, Rockford, and Decatur where we provided wellness exams, prenatal and postpartum assessments, and blood pressure screenings, all free of charge.

In observance of STI Awareness Month, Molina also partnered with [Springfield Clinic](#) to offer HIV testing and STI health education. The Molina mobile team has seen the real impact mobile unit stops can have on our local communities. Whether it be a mother receiving critical prenatal care that may not otherwise be available or children receiving vaccinations necessary for school, Molina is making a difference. [Learn more about the Molina Healthcare of Illinois Mobile Unit.](#)



Building Stronger Communities...One Life at a Time