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Funding Available for Breastfeeding Support via Title V

With funding from the Illinois Dept. of Public Health (IDPH) Office of Women's Health, the Illinois Public Health Institute (IPHI) has launched the "Improving Continuity of Care and Support for Breastfeeding throughout Illinois" Learning Collaborative.

This collaborative focuses on supporting organizations interacting with pregnant and parenting families to improve breastfeeding support and continuity of care, with a focus on resources or services for historically excluded communities and/or counties with the lowest breastfeeding initiation rates in the state.

Awards of \$4,500 will be allocated to five organizations. The application is due March 4 at 5 p.m. CT. Awardees will be notified March 11. [Click here](#) for more information, including eligibility and application information.

Toolkit: Improving Mental Health Outcomes for Vulnerable Black Children

Tailored for mental health practitioners, a [toolkit](#) provided by the African American Behavioral Health Center of Excellence details the complexities faced by African American children and youth in the realm of mental health. The resource seeks to enlighten practitioners about the historical and cultural factors impacting the well-being of young African Americans and equips professionals with strategies to enhance their support, including addressing historical trauma, racial trauma and the issue of suicide among Black youth.

Accepting Applications: Nurse Corps Loan Repayment Program

The Health Resources & Services Administration's Bureau of Health Workforce administers the Nurse Corps Loan Repayment Program, which provides funds to repay a portion of participants' outstanding qualifying educational loans. Loan repayment is available to Registered Nurses and Advanced Practice Registered Nurses working in an eligible public or private [Critical Shortage Facility](#), or nurse faculty employed at an eligible school of nursing. [Click here](#) for 2024 Nurse Corps Loan Repayment Program Application and Program Guidance, which contains all the information needed to complete the application. [Click here](#) to view a Nurse Corps Loan Repayment Program fact sheet for more information. Interested applicants can attend a [two-hour webinar](#) on Feb. 13 at 1:30 p.m. CT.

HRSA Takes Steps to Transform Organ Transplant System

Yesterday, the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) [announced](#) it is taking historic steps as part of its [Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network \(OPTN\) Modernization Initiative](#) to improve transparency, performance, governance and efficiency of the U.S. transplant system. HRSA said that across the OPTN's nearly 40-year history, all OPTN functions were managed by a single vendor rather than multiple contracts based on technical expertise in areas like IT or operations. Yesterday, HRSA issued requests for proposals to support multiple different contract awards, saying this action will increase competition ensuring patients and their families benefit from best-in-class vendors.

COVID-19 Information

The Illinois Dept. of Public Health (IDPH) has launched a weekly [Infectious Respiratory Disease Surveillance Dashboard](#) that will be updated weekly on Friday. This report provides the public with the latest data on hospital visits, seasonal trends, lab test positivity and demographic data.

[Click here](#) to visit the IDPH COVID-19 resources webpage. IDPH will continue to report the weekly number of people with COVID-19 admitted to hospitals from emergency departments, deaths and vaccinations, with COVID-19, influenza and respiratory syncytial virus information also reported through the dashboard of the [Illinois Wastewater Surveillance System](#).

Briefly Noted

The American Lung Association's "State of Lung Cancer" report [graded](#) Illinois as "average" in nearly all categories, including rate of new lung cancer cases, survival rate, early diagnosis, surgical treatment and screening, for the 2023 calendar year. Saying the state "still has a lot of work to do," Illinois is ranked 16th worst in the nation for new lung disease cases, reporting almost 60 cases per 100,000 people. While the state was graded "above average" for individuals receiving treatment, approximately 18 out of every 100 people went untreated in 2023.

The National Association of Epilepsy Centers has [updated guidelines](#) for specialized epilepsy centers to address patients' overall well-being, including recommendations for genetic testing and counseling, mental health screening, and greater attention to special-needs populations. This is the first update of the guidelines in more than a decade.

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