



BRIDGES

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE P3RC

P3RC CORE RESEARCH PROJECT

Pilot Collaboratives Designed to Support Health and Wellness Policy Compliance in Chicago Public Schools

Like many school districts nationwide, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) faces the challenge of adhering to a myriad of federal, state, and district-level health and wellness policies. CPS addresses some of these challenges through the Healthy CPS Initiative, which requires schools to designate Wellness Champions to support policy compliance. In some CPS Networks, Healthy CPS Network Specialists also provide network-wide support through navigation and technical assistance to Wellness Champions and other school personnel. Under the direction of a Specialist, CPS recently convened the district's first Healthy CPS-focused Professional Learning Community (PLC) to promote resource-sharing, problem-solving, and collaboration among Wellness Champions. Led by Jamie Chriqui and Elizabeth Jarpe-Ratner, the P3RC Core Research Project (CRP) conducted an evaluation of this pilot project, which included five sessions and ran from November 2023 to April 2024.

Evaluation Highlights Collaborative's Value

Most Wellness Champions reported joining the PLC to access resources for Healthy CPS compliance and engage in problem-solving with peers. Evaluation findings suggest that the PLC successfully met these needs; participants said they learned strategies to improve the implementation of Healthy CPS policies and valued the opportunity to discuss shared challenges and brainstorm solutions with peers. Lessons from this pilot may be used to expand PLCs to other CPS Networks and inform nationwide adoption of similar collaboratives to support school staff focused on health and wellness policy compliance.

The Core Research Project at APHA

The P3RC CRP is in its sixth year as part of a no-cost extension from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. At this phase, the CRP team is producing a variety of papers and presentations and shared findings at the 2024 American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Conference. At the conference, the team presented a poster on the implementation outcomes of the Specialist model and three abstracts highlighting the Specialist's role in promoting health and wellness in schools. Three of these abstracts were part of a school health panel, which discussed CPS' recent Professional Learning Communities, explored how the Specialist navigates fragmented resources to support schools, and discussed the position's impact and cost-effectiveness. Other members of the CRP's School Research and Translation Committee also presented during the panel.

P3RC Researchers Examine Unhealthy Food and Drink Advertising to Kids Across Media Channels

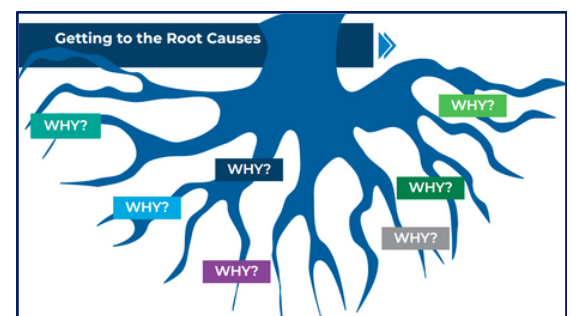
Led by the P3RC's Director Lisa Powell, a recent [study](#) found that children's exposure to television advertisements for food and beverage products has decreased substantially from 2013 to 2022, but children under 12 still saw an estimated 1,000 TV ads in 2022. Most of the ads seen by children under 12 featured unhealthy products. To limit childhood exposure, the study authors recommended limits on food and beverage advertising during times of day when children are most likely to watch television. Since most of the advertisements seen by children under 12 did not occur during children's programming (i.e., programming with greater than or equal to 35% child-audience share), limits that apply only to children's programming will be less effective.

Given the reductions in time spent watching television and the rise in youth digital media use, with additional funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies, the P3RC researchers have recently launched a new study to examine child and adolescent exposure to food and beverage marketing through social and digital media platforms.

Bringing Systems Change Training to Illinois Health Department Staff

The field of public health needs system-change leaders now more than ever to address today's complex challenges. These challenges require diverse and collective action to sustainably address the root causes of persistent health inequities. Unfortunately, there are few systems-change leadership training opportunities for governmental public health practitioners that use real challenges and offer problem-solving in real-time. To address this opportunity, the P3RC partnered with the Peoria City and County Health Department (HD) to pilot the Public Health Leadership Institute for Systems Change (PHLISC).

Based on the P3RC and Public Health Training Center Network's [Learning Agenda for Systems Change Framework](#), PHLISC included three facilitated workshops, self-paced group work, and coaching sessions, with a goal to help Peoria HD staff unpack the challenges faced by their communities through a systems change approach. PHLISC supported the health department in identifying new approaches to organizational and community challenges including workforce retention, addressing elevated blood lead levels, and improving maternal and child health outcomes. PHLISC focused on systems thinking and supporting staff in identifying the social and structural determinants of health to transform the HD's approach to addressing several community challenges.

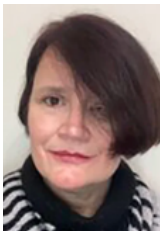


An evaluation of the PHLISC Pilot utilized post-session surveys and facilitated discussions to assess its impact on staff competency in systems thinking and leadership skills. The evaluation also assessed specific PHLISC activities to understand the most effective exercises and tools. Results informed the development of a new statewide Leadership Institute for state and local governmental public health that commenced on April 10, 2025. [The Leadership Institute](#) is being offered as a part of the Illinois Department of Public Health's CDC-funded Public Health Infrastructure Grant.

BUILDING RESEARCH CAPACITY FOR POLICY, PRACTICE, SYSTEMS, & ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

P3RC Funds Applied Practice Experiences for MPH Students

The P3RC seeks to increase the capacity of future public health leaders to create and implement sustainable and effective public health strategies. To this end, P3RC provided financial support to six students in 2025 to complete their Applied Practice Experience (APE) on policy, systems, environmental change approaches and approaches focused on social determinants of health. Awardees have completed their APEs in settings from dental clinics to research centers and documented their experiences and learnings on the P3RC blog.



Integrating Community Input to Improve Cancer Resources

Read the blog, [Community Voices Shape the Future of the University of Illinois Cancer Center](#), authored by Anne Marie Murphy, who interned with the UI Cancer Center to document the development of community-driven changes in partnership and resource allocation through a community assessment.



Leveraging Demographic and Socioeconomic Data to Understand Dental Caries in Children

Anum Ijaz's APE utilized dental patients' demographic information to understand factors associated with childhood caries. Read more about it in her blog, [Championing Little Smiles: Investigating the Complex Factors Behind Caries in Children](#)



Supporting Increased Prescription Inhaler Accessibility in Illinois

LaMonica Sykes educated stakeholders on the importance of lung health policies and measures. Read about her experience in [Advancing the Affordability of Prescription Inhalers in Illinois](#).



Formalizing Community Health Workers' Role in the Public Health System

Read [Community Health Workers Make a Major Impact in Addressing South Side Health Disparities](#) authored by Cealisa Johnson. Johnson worked with various public health professionals to explore expansion of the role of community health workers in the south-side healthcare ecosystem.



Enhancing Birthing Health Outcomes through Stakeholder Collaboration

Tynetta Hill-Mohammed interned with the Chicago South Side Birthing Center and met with key organizations to inform policy and community-driven efforts to reduce birthing health disparities. Learn more here: [Reducing Birthing Health Disparities in Chicago's South Side](#).



Engaging Future Surgeons in Public Health and Policy Education and Volunteerism

Anthony Douglas designed and launched a fellowship for aspiring surgeons that enables use of public health and prevention frameworks in practice. Read his blog, [Inspiring the Next Generation of Surgeon Advocates](#), to learn about the components of the fellowship.

P3RC- FUNDED FACULTY PUBLICATIONS IN POLICY, PRACTICE, SYSTEMS & ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

Seed Funding Products

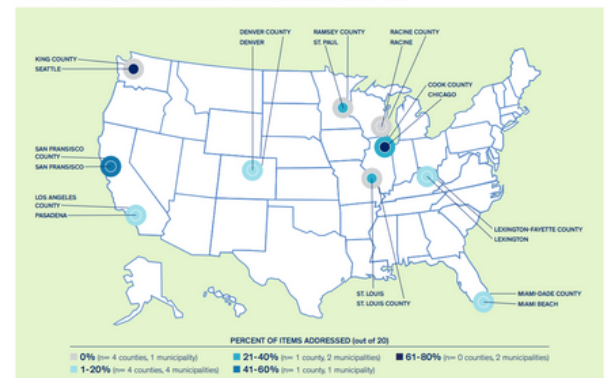
The P3RC provides limited funding for UIC SPH faculty pilot projects related to policy, practice, systems, and environmental (PPSE)-oriented research. Recent publications are included below; more research briefs are planned as a result of this funding and will be available in the next few months.

Workplace Policies and Health

Read about how workplace policies in 10 large cities and their corresponding counties have changed with the rise of the “gig economy.” Betsy Piekarz-Porter and co-authors summarize findings from their research brief in the blog, [County and Municipal Policies Start to Move Beyond Minimum Wage](#).

Read the full research brief [here](#).

FIGURE 1 Percent of Employment Policies Addressed in Each County and Municipality, as of July 1, 2023



Early Childhood Development

Learn about the efforts to provide an integrated child-well visit and parental counseling for Latinx families at Chicago-based, Esperanza Health Centers. Explore parents' experiences as they discover the significance of play in their child's development in Jessica Rothstein and Reshma Shah's brief, [Esperanza Families React Positively to Early Child Development Intervention "Sit Down & Play."](#)

P3RC PUBLICATIONS

Journal Articles, Research Briefs and Fact Sheets

Early Childhood Development

- Rothstein J., Shah R. [Esperanza Families React Positively to Early Child Development Intervention "Sit Down & Play"](#) Research Brief No.134. Policy, Practice and Prevention Research Center, University of Illinois Chicago. Chicago, IL. July 2024. doi: 10.25417/uic.25828456.

Nutrition

- Oddo VM, Leider J, Tovar A, Powell LM, Elenio E, Vadiveloo MK. [Food Insecurity and Risk of Nutrition Insecurity Among Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program participants in Rhode Island and Connecticut, USA](#). Preventive Medicine Reports. 2025 March; 51: 103002. doi: 10.1016/j.pmedr.2025.103002.
- Vadiveloo MK, Elenio E, Leider J, Oddo VM, Pipito AA, Powell LM, Tovar A. [Design of the What's On Your Plate SNAP Study](#). Research Brief No. 139. Policy, Practice and Prevention Research Center, University of Illinois Chicago. Chicago, IL. November 2024. doi: 10.25417/uic.27380922.
- Vandenbroeck A, Schermbeck RM, Leider J, Powell LM. [Television Advertising and Store Availability of Toddler Milks](#). Research Brief No. 138. Policy, Practice and Prevention Research Center, University of Illinois Chicago. Chicago, IL. November 2024. doi: 10.25417/uic.27144720.
- Schermbeck RM, Leider J, Powell LM. [The Presence of Added Sugars and Other Sweeteners in Food and Beverage Products Advertised on Television in the United States, 2022](#). Nutrients. 2024 November; 16(23): 3981. doi: 10.3390/nu16233981.
- Powell LM, Leider J, Schermbeck RM, Vandenbroeck A, Harris J. [Trends in Children's Exposure to Food and Beverage Advertising on Television](#). JAMA Network Open. 2024 August; 7(8):e2429671. doi: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.29671.

P3RC PUBLICATIONS (CONTINUED)

Journal Articles, Research Briefs and Fact Sheets

Nutrition, continued

- Falbe J, Marinello S, Wolf, EC, Solar S, Powell, LM. Food Environment After Implementation of a Healthy Checkout Policy. JAMA Network Open.2024 August; 7(8): e2421731-e2421731. 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.21731
- Powell LM, Vandenbroeck A, Leider J, Pipito AA, Moran A. Evaluation of Fast-Food Restaurant Kids' Meal Beverage Offerings 1 Year After a State-Level Healthy Beverage Default Policy. AJPM Focus. 2024 June; 3(3):100226. doi: 10.1016/j.focus.2024.100226.
- Leider J, Li M, Pipito AA, Powell LM. No Impact on Potential Kids' Meal Substitutes in Fast-Food Restaurants One Year Following an Illinois Healthy Beverage Default Policy. Research Brief No. 133. Policy, Practice and Prevention Research Center, University of Illinois Chicago. Chicago, IL. April 2024. doi: 10.25417/uic.25563591.
- Asada Y, DiStefano A, Brown A, Howard B, Raczynski E. COVID-19 Era WIC Waivers: Perspectives from WIC Directors. Research Brief No. 132. Policy, Practice, and Prevention Research Center, University of Illinois Chicago. Chicago, IL. March 2024. doi: 10.25417/uic.25664658.

School Health and Wellness

- Jarpe-Ratner E, Little D, Benomar N, Dominguez Magdaleno J, Belcher K, Liu J, Marshall B. Initiating and Sustaining GSAs Across the District as Part of a Vision for Equity: a Case Study in Chicago Public Schools. Journal of School and Health. 2024 Dec; 94(12): 1153-1163. doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/josh.13540.
- Jarpe-Ratner E, Offstein M, William A, Odoms-Young A, Chriqui JF. Engaging Families in Supporting the Whole Child: Chicago West Side Parents' Perceptions of Child Health. Journal of Child and Family Studies. 2024 Jan; 33: 968-981. doi: 10.1007/s10826-024-02786-2.

Sexual Health

- Jarpe-Ratner E, Altman L, Schnable A, Reid B, Marshall B, Matias K, Ramirez- Mercado K, Fagen MC, Masinter L. Formative Research and Development of a Referral Toolkit for Sexual Health Services Linkages within Chicago Public High Schools. Evaluation and Program Planning. 2025 June; 110: 102540. doi: 10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2025.102540.
- Benomar N, Little D, Dominguez Magdaleno J, Belcher K, Lui J, Marshall B, Jarpe-Ratner E. Creating Safe and Supportive Environments in Chicago Public Schools Through Genders and Sexualities Alliances. Brief No. 136. Policy, Practice, and Prevention Research Center, University of Illinois Chicago. Chicago, IL. September 2024. doi:10.25417/uic.26035327.
- Belcher K, Liu J, Bloedel A, Marshall B, DiPaolo M, Jarpe-Ratner E. Expanding Districtwide Comprehensive Sexual Education to Pre-Kindergarten in the Chicago Public School District. Brief No. 135. Policy, Practice, and Prevention Research Center, University of Illinois Chicago. Chicago, IL. August 2024. doi:10.25417/uic.26035324.
- Belcher K, Fishman E, Ramirez-Mercado K, Marshall B, DiPaolo M, Jarpe-Ratner E. Facilitators and Barriers to Implementing a Comprehensive Sexual Health Education Policy in Chicago Public Schools. Journal of School Health. 2024 Jul 4. doi: 10.1111/josh.13489.

Physical Activity, Built Environment and Land Use

- Marquez DX, Tellez M, Ocampo-Mota J, Jaldin, MA, Hughes S, Ajilore O, Chen Jinsong C, Walton S, Muramatsu N. C.E.R.E.B.R.O.: A Home-based Physical Activity Study for Older Latino Adults. Contemporary Clinical Trials Communications. 2025 January; 44: 101436.doi: 10.1016/j.conctc.2025.101436.

Workplace Health and Policy

- Piekarz-Porter E, Stiehl E, Mincu N, Oddo VM, Powers ET, Kim SJ. A Closer Look at Novel U.S. Employment Policies at the County and Municipal level. Brief No. 137. Policy, Practice and Prevention Research Center, University of Illinois Chicago. Chicago, IL. October 2024. doi: 10.25417/uic.26608288.