

Impact Report

October 2024 – September 2025



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For more than two decades, the Commission's legacy organizations, the Regional Health Commission and Alive & Well Communities, have been deeply rooted in Trust, driven by Equity, and dedicated to creating bridges to Healing.

Today, The Community Health Commission of Missouri (CHCM) continues to build on those legacies with a statewide strategy of achieving zero health disparities for all Missourians through an Equity-Centered, Trauma-Informed Care approach.

Opening Letter from the CEO

Dear Partners, Friends, and Fellow Changemakers,

As we reflect on this transformative year, I invite you to take a deep breath, ground yourself in the miracle of this present moment, and exhale with gratitude for the strength and resilience that have brought us to today. Every challenge, every lesson, and every success has prepared us for what lies ahead.

This inaugural Annual Impact Report marks a defining milestone in our journey—from merger to stabilization, from vision to statewide leadership. It is a moment to pause and honor the people and partnerships that made this possible. To our team, past and present, whose steadfast commitment has laid the foundation for this organization's growth—thank you. To our Commissioners and Advisory Board members, whose expertise and guidance have helped us navigate the complexities of merger and re-design—thank you. To our funders and philanthropic partners who believe in our vision and invest in a future where every Missourian has the opportunity to thrive—thank you. And to our communities, who continue to invite us into partnership and hold us accountable to our purpose—thank you for being both our compass and our guardrails.

The Community Health Commission of Missouri (CHCM) was born from the bold merger of the St. Louis Regional Health Commission and Alive & Well Communities. Together, we carry forward a legacy of innovation rooted in relationships. CHCM exists to bridge the wisdom of community with the influence of systems—to create space where shared power, trust, and accountability can transform the conditions that shape health. We know that achieving zero health disparities requires more than good intentions; it requires courage, collaboration, and collective action.

This report shares the story of how CHCM has evolved—who we are, what we've accomplished, and where we are headed. You'll see the early fruits of a new statewide model grounded in equity-centered, trauma-informed practice. You'll see how policy, data, and storytelling come together to elevate community voice and shape a healthier Missouri. Most importantly, you'll see the power of partnership at work.

As we move into 2026, we do so with renewed clarity and conviction. Our newly adopted Strategic Plan charts the course for CHCM's next chapter—grounded in four interdependent Areas of Impact: **Community-led Equity and Healing, Policy and Systems Transformation, Workforce and Capacity Building, and Data, Accountability, and Collaboration**. Together, these areas provide a roadmap for transforming Missouri's health landscape from fragmented efforts to a coordinated equity infrastructure.

We bring these priorities to life through our **6Ps of Practice**—a shared approach that guides how we lead, learn, and partner across the state: centering **Participatory** frameworks that elevate lived experience; applying an equity-centered **Policy** screen to every initiative; investing in **Pipeline** programs that cultivate a diverse and trauma-informed workforce; empowering **People** to heal, lead, and thrive; advancing **Place-based** strategies that strengthen belonging and community health; and sustaining **Partnerships** that drive collective impact.

Together, these commitments form the bridge between community wisdom and systems accountability—our foundation for realizing an audacious but achievable vision: zero health disparities in Missouri and beyond. Thank you for walking this path with us. Together, we can transform Missouri into a state where every neighbor—regardless of zip code, race, or circumstance—has the opportunity to heal, to thrive, and to live fully.



In gratitude and solidarity,

Riisa Rawlins, MSW
Chief Executive Officer
Community Health Commission of Missouri



General Impact



Empowerment Workshops Facilitated:
227 Workshops



Training attendance:
Over 1100



Healing Circles Facilitated:
41



Dollars distributed to community organizations via Seniors Fund:
\$350k

Statewide Expansion

Expanding partnerships across Missouri

In 2025, CHCM deepened its statewide presence by expanding both our community partnerships and advisory boards, ensuring that lived experience and regional diversity continue to guide our work.

Kansas City Region

CHCM's partnerships in Kansas City continue to expand through collaborations with local school districts, health organizations, and community coalitions committed to equity-centered systems change.

This year, CHCM deepened its relationship with the Hickman Mills C-1 School District, creating a partnership to offer Community Resilience Convenings.

These convenings, open to Hickman Mills staff, parents, and community members are an opportunity to support staff, families, and community partners as they navigate district-wide financial changes.

The work in Hickman Mills reflects a broader movement across Kansas City to build sustainable networks of care and resilience, encouraging community members to heal and thrive.

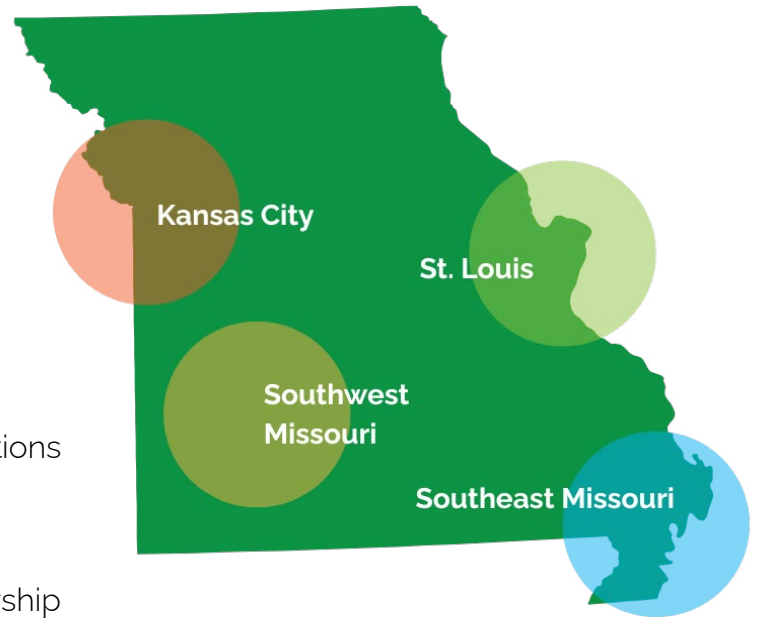
St. Louis Region

In St. Louis, CHCM's partnerships continue to bridge health, art, and social justice, bringing creative and community-driven approaches to equity work.

This year, CHCM partnered with the Regional Arts Commission (RAC) to launch our first Artist in Residence program, beginning in October 2025.

The selected artist will spend 12 months embedded within CHCM, collaborating with community partners and residents to co-create projects that uplift lived experiences and spark conversations around racial and economic health inequities.

The residency will bring health justice to life in new and transformative ways, through storytelling, visual arts, performance, and multimedia. This partnership builds on CHCM's expanding community network in St. Louis with partners who center belonging, voice, and community power.



Statewide Expansion

Southeast Missouri Region

Faith and Healing in Southeast Missouri: The Journey to the Beloved Community is a three-year initiative supported through the Missouri Foundation for Health. It is designed to equip faith leaders across the five-county region in Southeast Missouri to build trauma-informed, healing-centered ministries that nurture resilience and belonging.

Through a blend of virtual and in-person meetings, participating pastors, ministers, and faith-based leaders deepen their capacity to respond to trauma with compassion. The Train-the-Trainer covers the following topics: 1) Historical and Theological Roots of the Beloved Community; 2) Trauma-Informed Healing Practices; 3) Faith, Mental Health, and Resilience; 4) Community Engagement and Dialogue; and 5) SALT in Action: Service, Affirmation, Love, Transformation.

Led by facilitators Jermine Alberty, SALT Initiative, and Sean Ivory, implementation director of Southeast Missouri, CHCM, the Journey to the Beloved Community integrates CHCM's evidence-based framework of EC-TIC, and data on regional health disparities. Together, participants explore the intersections of health equity, faith, and healing while cultivating inclusive leadership, active listening, and cultural humility skillsets.

Through this initiative, CHCM advances its strategic impact areas of empowering People in our communities to heal and thrive, sustaining strong Partnerships to drive collective impact, and advancing Place-based strategies to strengthen community health. We believe that in tight-knit communities, the faith community can serve as the connective tissue bringing diverse community members together – it is the heartbeat of a community while also serving as a determinant of population health (<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6366521/>).

Through the Journey to the Beloved Community, CHCM learned of an opportunity to further support one of our participating faith leaders, Rev. Miner, in sponsoring a community health fair to meet the immediate health and wellness needs of his congregation and community in Lilbourn, Missouri. This collaboration exemplifies how trusted partnerships and responsive action can translate into sustainable community change.

The social capital these institutions hold to improve health outcomes and co-create solutions is invaluable, and we are deeply appreciative of the trust and partnerships that make this work possible.



Advisory Board Expansion

To ensure statewide impact is informed by diverse lived experience, CHCM expanded the membership of our three advisory boards - Wellness & Care, Community, and Provider Services - to include members from across Missouri. This expansion deepens representation not only across regions, but across identities, professions, and experience.

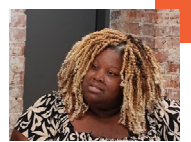
Our advisory boards include new voices from St. Louis, Kansas City, and Southeast Missouri. They each offer invaluable insight into what equity, healing, and access to care mean in our communities.

Wellness and Care

"I joined the Advisory Board to amplify community voices and strengthen family-centered health equity. Collaborating statewide and seeing shared visions transform into tangible outcomes has been incredibly impactful. I'm excited about CHCM's continued commitment to inclusive innovation and expanding equity across Missouri communities."

- Alecia Deal

Wellness and Care Advisory Board member, St. Louis



Community

"I was inspired to join the CHCM Advisory Board after witnessing the leadership and staff embody true community through inclusiveness, compassion, and dignity. It's been deeply gratifying to see that commitment move from theory to meaningful action, all while centering each individual's life story—past, present, and future."

- Sal Valadez

Community Advisory Board member, St. Louis



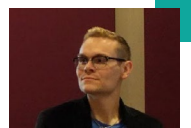
Provider Services

"I joined CHCM's Advisory Board to help close the gap between what we know and what we do. CHCM elevates the people closest to the work: patients, nurses, and local leaders who all help align resources around what matters. The most impactful part has been seeing statewide coordination replace silo-styled care: one plan, shared metrics, and real accountability/ownership. That's how we move the needle for Missourians. With lifesaving programs like Medicaid under attack everyday, the time to act and speak up is now!"

I think what I'm most excited about is the sheer possibility that is in front of us. For coordinated action, with a community voice at the center, this structure and mission has amazing potential to better health and outcomes for some of our most vulnerable communities. This work can't be done alone - nor should it be."

- Jacob Sumner

Provider Services Advisory Board member, Kansas City



Our Impact: October 2024 – September 2025

Introducing the Board Approved Strategic Plan (August 2025)

Like many organizations working within the health equity landscape, the Community Health Commission of Missouri stands at a defining moment, an era marked by shifting landscapes, growing urgencies, and a deepened call to action. Across our state, communities continue to navigate the long-term impacts of these shifts, along with systemic inequities and chronic trauma. Yet, in this moment, there is immense potential for change.

To meet this moment, we recognize that we need a unified strategy to guide our bold vision.

Our strategic planning process became that unifying opportunity. Over the past year, along with our partners, the Rome Group, we have brought together community members, staff, partners, and board members to reflect on our legacy—where we have been and where we're going. Together, we worked to unify our mission and renew our commitment to advancing health equity. As a result, we have charted a path that is both visionary and responsive, grounded in lived experience from the voices of the communities we serve, informed by data, and anchored in our values of trust, healing, and equity.

The plan is a living tool and blueprint on how CHCM will emerge from vision to measurable impact and deepen our relationship as a trusted convener and catalyst for change.

Through our four areas of impact—Community-Led Equity and Healing, Policy and Systems Transformation, Workforce and Capacity Building, and Data, Accountability and Collaboration — we are defining what community and systems partnerships look like, feel like, and how they measure success (or we can say what they hope to achieve when community-voice is at the center). Together, we're building a stronger Missouri where Trust, Equity, and Healing are the foundations for sustained partnerships that drive collective impact.



Strategic Plan 2025-2028

Vision

The Community Health Commission of Missouri envisions achieving zero health disparities through community and health system partnerships.

Mission

We power the connection of community and systems to co-create innovative solutions that yield health equity in all policies and outcomes.

Strategy Statement

The Community Health Commission of Missouri (CHCM) operates at the intersection of community and systems to co-create bold, effective solutions that advance health equity for all.

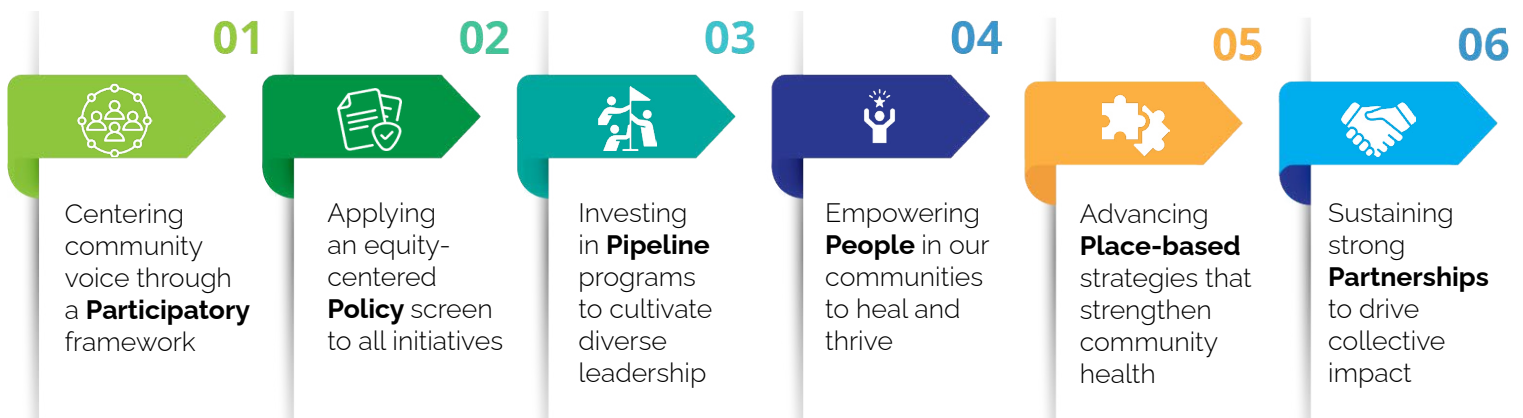
We build trusted relationships, elevate lived experience, and strengthen grassroots organizations to champion community healing and drive systemic change. As a bridge, CHCM connects communities most impacted by health disparities with health care providers, public health departments, social service providers, legislators, system leaders, and decision-makers.

Grounded in four areas of impact:

1. Community-Led Equity and Healing
2. Policy and Systems Transformation
3. Workforce and Capacity Building
4. Data Accountability and Collaboration

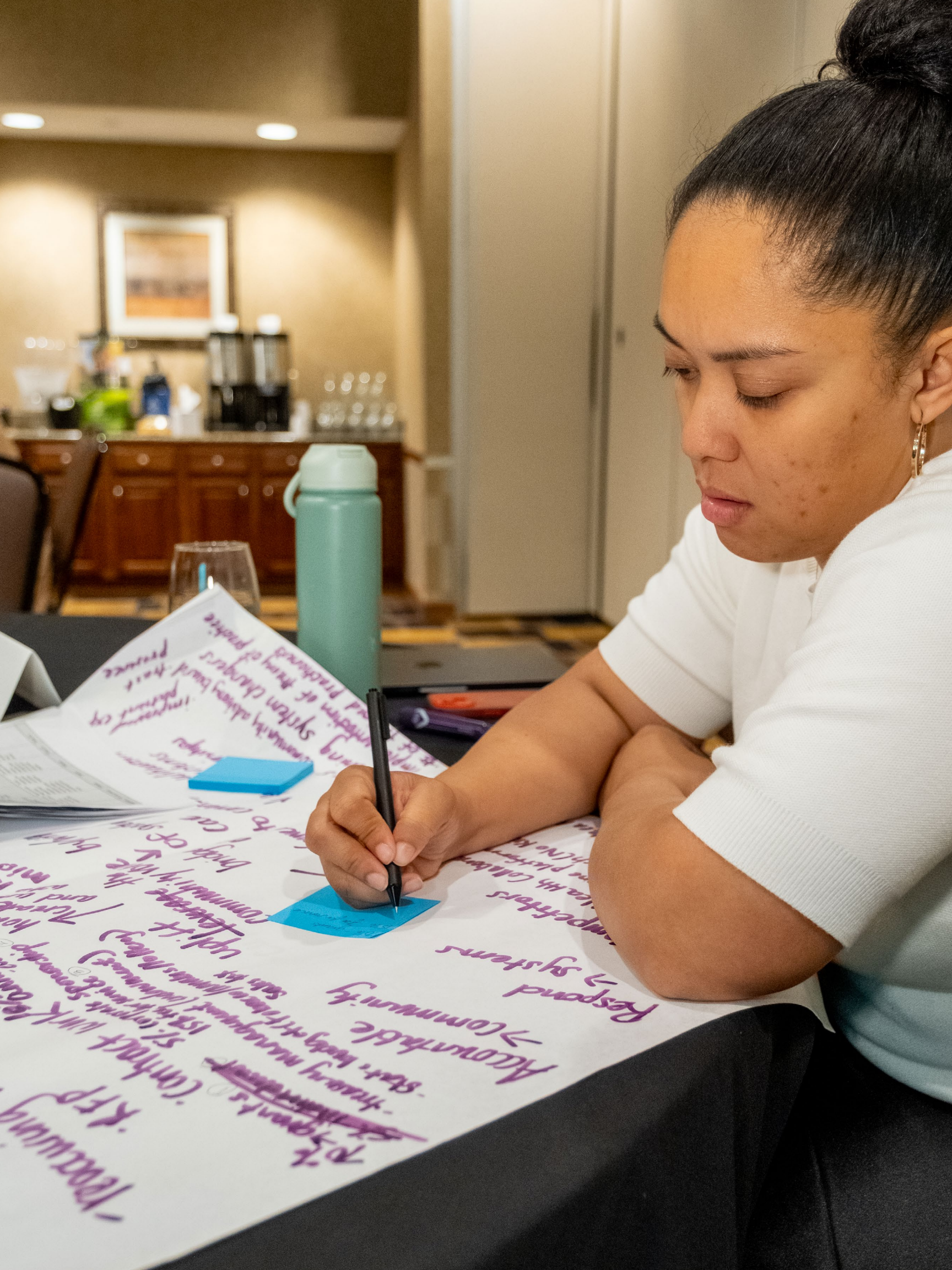
CHCM advances initiatives that improve access to high-quality health care, increase public trust, and enhance health outcomes across Missouri.

We bring these pillars to life through the 6Ps:



To ensure long-term impact and sustainability, CHCM is actively working to diversify its revenue through a blend of earned income, philanthropic investment, and public funding. In partnership with communities and systems, we are building a future with zero health disparities in Missouri and beyond through equity-driven design, transformative policy, and community leadership.

Graphic placeholder



Community-Led Equity and Healing



Goal: Increase the number of community-led initiatives and solutions grounded in lived experience, equity, healing, and resiliency through facilitating convenings, expanding participatory budgeting, and implementing participatory research (Community-IRB).

EC-TIC For Community Impact

Across Missouri, community members are coming together to heal. Through CHCM's Equity-Centered Trauma-Informed Care (EC-TIC) trainings for community, we're creating spaces that affirm lived experiences, offer tangible tools for resilience, and support people in reclaiming their stories.

In Healing Circles, neighbors, caregivers, organizers, and everyday Missourians gather to share, reflect, and connect. These safe, supportive spaces allow participants to name the weight they carry — grief, burnout, generational pain — and find strength in the presence of others who understand. In our Community Empowerment Workshops, attendees build skills in emotional regulation, self-awareness, and collective action, often walking away with new language, renewed energy, and personalized strategies for healing.

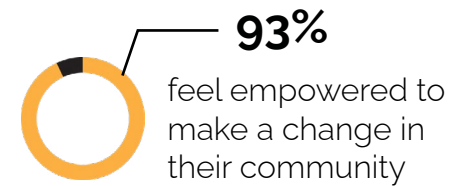
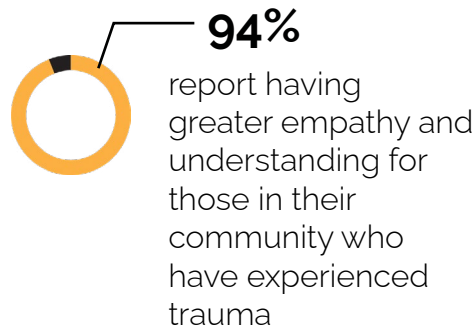
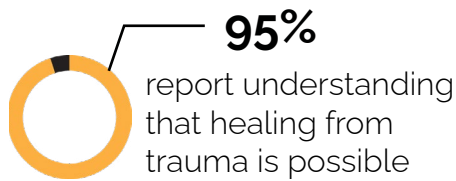
Already, these offerings have made a measurable difference.



Community-Led Equity and Healing Data

1. Over the last **12 months**, at least **1123 community members** have attended equity-centered, trauma-informed trainings and capacity-building workshops.

2. CHCM has facilitated **227 Community Empowerment Workshops**



These empowerment workshops are often facilitated by CHCM Community Consultants. Community Consultants are neighborhood leaders trained by CHCM to strengthen local relationships, facilitate healing and empowerment spaces, deepen understanding of community trauma, and mobilize residents to advocate for policies and practices that promote healing and prevent harm.

Through their work, Community Consultants describe the power of these workshops in their own communities. In their own words:

“

What we think is common sense for us could be a hardship for others. The simple things the workshop offers make a big difference in their lives.”

- Community Consultant

“

Empowerment means giving people back power over their life. When they felt like they lost control or lost their way, letting them know it's not over—that this is just the beginning—gives them a sense of power and control.”

- Community Consultant

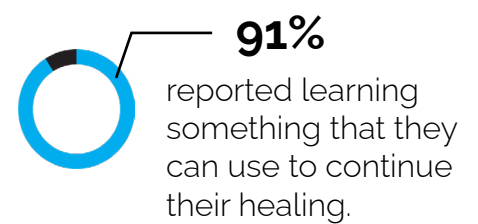
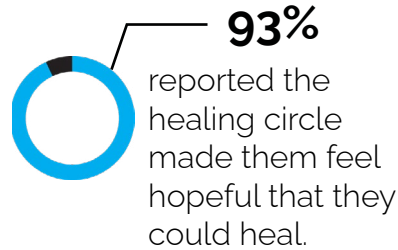
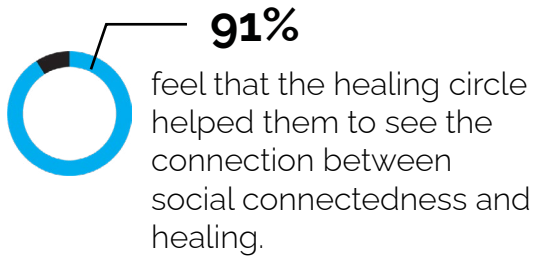
“

Working with CHCM... “didn't just heal others; it healed me. I found my purpose. I am light. I am a repairer of the bridge.”

- Community Consultant

Community-Led Equity and Healing Data

3. 41 healing circles facilitated



“

When we start the conversation, they find out they're not the only one in a situation or an experience. So by them being able to share in a space that's safe and they feel it ain't gonna be negative, they walk out more connected.”

- Community Consultant

“

People come in skeptical at first. Nobody wants to talk about what they've been through or relive those memories. But in order to heal, we need some type of intervention. By the end, they may not be fully healed, but they're on the road to healing.”

- Community Consultant

“

From the beginning to now, you see growth. Where you once would cry over your past trauma, you're able to share your trauma. We're resilient. We can overcome any situation if we choose to.”

- Community Consultant

From church basements in the Bootheel, to community centers in St. Louis, to libraries in Kansas City, we've begun planting seeds of healing across the state — one circle, one conversation, one workshop at a time. This powerful work has been made possible in partnership with the University of Missouri Extension and the Missouri Foundation for Health.



Community-Led Equity and Healing Data

Seniors Fund

What happens when seniors get to decide how funding is spent in their own communities? Through CHCM's Seniors Community Fund in partnership with Deaconess Foundation, we're seeing firsthand how participatory budgeting can shift power, unlock creativity, and meet real needs.

Launched with the belief that those closest to the issues should shape the solutions, the Fund ensures seniors and caregivers lead decision-making. Instead of top-down grants or rigid program designs, this model asks: What would make life better for you and your neighbors? From there, seniors evaluate applications, and direct funding toward projects that reflect their lived experiences.



The Seniors Community Fund offers an accessible, tangible, and inclusive space for seniors, a platform where our most experienced community members inspire real change. By honoring the wisdom of our elders, championing their aspirations for the future, and supporting their power to decide how the future is realized, we are working together to build deeper connections for generations to come."

**- Rev. Bethany Johnson-Javois,
President and CEO of Deaconess Foundation**



The results speak for themselves:

12 grassroots organizations across the St. Louis region received a total of \$350,000 to implement transportation pilots, mental health supports, wraparound health services, home repair initiatives, and other community-based efforts that reflect the priorities of aging Missourians.

And just as importantly, participants and grantees report feeling seen, respected, and empowered — not just as recipients of services, but as civic leaders shaping what aging with dignity should look like.

Interviews with grantees revealed the Seniors Fund helped these organizations support seniors' basic needs (food, shelter, health care navigation) as well as their independence and community engagement. Grantees were able to expand the quality, reach, volume, and range of services they offered that allow seniors to safely age-in-place with access to vital mental and physical health resources. Many highlighted the Fund's flexibility as its greatest strength, allowing them to design and deliver programs that reflect real community needs. Without this support, several said they would have had to restrict services, reduce staffing, or turn away clients.

“

Our seniors are in these little silos, not having the transportation they need... we were able to connect those seniors to others to participate in some of these events. And then we saw that not just the quality of life [changed], but it was a reduction in the depression, a reduction in just wanting to be alone, [a change in] not having someone to connect with."

- Walk N Faith



“

As a member of the Senior Advisory Board, I am proud to be a repeat representative for the Senior Community Fund Subcommittee. This initiative has given me an opportunity to make a direct and visible impact on the providers of specific resources for our senior community. It is inspiring to receive feedback from the recipients of the funding. I am looking forward to continuing to provide my input and insights related to the senior community."

**- Tony Davis,
Seniors Advisory Board Member**



“

There's already a stigma surrounding mental health services, but for seniors it can look different... We wanted to approach it in a way that says, Hey, let's look at ways to expand community for you, to increase your ability to socialize with others who may have similar experiences and provide some psychoeducation along the way."

**- Ignite Hope
(funded organization)**

Community-Led Equity and Healing Data

Community Institutional Review Board Plan

At CHCM, we are redefining what ethical research oversight can and should be, especially when it involves communities that have historically been marginalized, exploited, or excluded.

With support from Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, we are creating a Community Institutional Review Board (Community IRB) pilot that redistributes power, values lived experience, and guarantees that research is not just about communities but led by them.

To date, CHCM has engaged six leaders in community-engaged research across the country and around the world. Through these conversations, we have learned that there is no single blueprint for this work. Instead, it is a collaborative, iterative process that can take more than a year for staff to train, establish guidelines, and begin reviewing research proposals.

Each board we've spoken with has underscored both the value and the challenges of building and sustaining this type of work. From them, we've gained practical lessons, candid reflections, and encouragement that fuel our own next steps. As we move forward, we are digging deeper into the nuts-and-bolts of board development with renewed clarity and momentum. As leaders from the Galveston Island Community Research Advisory Committee (GICRAC) shared,



If you give power, that means you can take it. But when the community holds the power, that's when things shift."

- Leaders from the GICRAC

We also engaged six members of our Wellness & Care Advisory Board to better understand CHCM's role and potential interest in shaping a Community IRB. These conversations revealed a deep desire among our members to see research processes that meaningfully center the voices of those most affected. Advisory Board members highlighted that while traditional IRBs serve a critical role in protecting participants, they often fall short in ensuring that research priorities align with community needs and values.



In the 10–15 years that I was involved with a traditional IRB, I felt as if no one intensely worked on how to engage the community in research or considered what they think is most important."

- CHCM Wellness and Care Advisory Board Member

This perspective underscores both the opportunity and the responsibility CHCM has to advance a model of research governance that not only safeguards participants but also elevates community priorities, wisdom, and lived experience as central to the process.

Policy and Systems Transformation



Goal: Strengthen CHCM's capacity to influence state and local policy by developing internal advocacy infrastructure, providing board and staff training, and engaging with Missouri's legislative process.

Building a Visible Policy Presence

Throughout the year, CHCM staff met with lawmakers across party lines to elevate community-driven priorities around health equity, Medicaid access, and trauma-informed care. These engagements included conversations with state representatives Elizabeth Fuchs, Dale Wright, and Becky Laubinger; state senators Karla May and Mike Bernskoetter (via staff); and staff from the offices of U.S. representative Jason Smith and U.S. senator Josh Hawley.

Through testimony and sign-on letters, CHCM's advocacy reached multiple levels of government. We spoke before the St. Louis City Board of Aldermen in support of Department of Health funding, submitted written testimony to the Missouri House during the Special Session on HB1 and HJR3, and joined national coalitions to defend Medicaid coverage, oppose harmful federal budget proposals (H.R. 1), and support enhanced premium tax credits.

Federal Shutdown Roundtable

As federal budget negotiations signaled potential changes to SNAP benefits and Marketplace subsidies, CHCM convened a Federal Shutdown Roundtable to assess the implications for Missouri families. More than 40 community leaders, policy experts, and service providers joined the conversation, sharing how federal decisions translate into rising health insurance premiums, food insecurity, and looming gaps in coverage.

Moderated by CEO Riisa Rawlins, the discussion offered a real-time analysis of emerging federal policies and identified opportunities for coordinated advocacy. Coverage of the roundtable in The Missouri Independent and other local news outlets expanded the reach of these insights and reinforced CHCM's role as a trusted convener on statewide health policy issues.

Communicating Policy in Plain Language

Our communications team amplified these efforts **through 11 advocacy alerts and policy updates** reaching more than 6,000 Missourians.

We developed **eight policy briefs and one-pagers** that broke down complex topics — from Medicaid coverage threats and ballot initiatives to voter registration and the legislative process in Missouri — making information accessible and actionable for communities statewide.

Policy and Systems Transformation

Community Participation

Policy change is strongest when it's rooted in lived experience. Through town halls, panel discussions, and advocacy days, CHCM created spaces for dialogue and collective problem-solving.

At the **Amendment 3 panel discussion** co-hosted with UMSL's Political Science Academy (PSA), over 40 students explored the intersections of reproductive health and state policy, listening to diverse perspectives from community and reproductive health advocates.

In partnership with the St. Louis City Department of Health, CHCM hosted two community forums — the **STL Black Women Forum** and the **Trans + Nonbinary Community Forum** — offering spaces for open, healing-centered conversation.

Our **Men's Health Equity Town Hall**, also hosted in partnership with UMSL PSA, highlighted how gender norms shape health outcomes.

“

Men often feel they don't have time to go to the doctor. They fear losing wages or even their job if they take time off to seek care. When you're socialized to believe that going to the doctor or recognizing that you're sick makes you weak... it creates this gender norm that admitting something is wrong means I'm not in control.”

- Dr. Saint Rice, Men's Health Equity Town Hall panelist

“

We have to continue to work toward educating our young men, especially our men of color, and making sure they understand the importance of taking care of themselves. It is okay to go to the doctor.”

- Lester Gillespie, Men's Health Equity Town Hall panelist



Policy and Systems Transformation

Two **Medicaid at Risk** panel discussions in partnership with the Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis brought together more than 250 advocates, students, and policymakers.

“

Medicaid serves as a critical safety net, but proposed work requirements would undermine it.”

- Sheldon Weisgrau,
Vice President of Health Policy & Advocacy at
Missouri Foundation for Health

“

If someone lost their job and couldn't provide recent proof of employment, they could lose coverage at the very moment they need it most. If you don't invest in people's health, you end up with far more costly and catastrophic outcomes.”

- Amy Blouin,
President & CEO of Missouri Budget Project

CHCM also joined three statewide advocacy events — the **Child Health Summit**, **Empower Missouri Advocacy Day**, and **Kids Win Advocacy Day** — reaching more than 800 attendees collectively and mobilizing Missourians around shared goals for equity and wellbeing.

Through town halls, panel discussions, and advocacy days, CHCM continues to elevate lived experience in shaping public policy.



Policy and Systems Transformation

Policy Capacity Building

CHCM is building advocacy capacity across generations. Over the last year, we have equipped students, professionals, and community members with the knowledge and tools to influence policy change. Through a series of interactive trainings and presentations, participants learned how to connect personal and community experience to legislative action.

- **Policy and Equity training with UMSL Nursing Program:** Reached more than 70 senior-year nursing students, who explored health disparities in the St. Louis region and how trauma shows up in their communities and clinical practice.
- **Health and Wellness Advisory Committee & Senior Advisory Board:** Provided tailored advocacy training focused on understanding the policy process and identifying pathways for collective action.
- **Health Forward Partnership:** CHCM and Health Forward Foundation policy teams co-facilitated the "Realizing Your Power: The Basics of Nonprofit Policy Advocacy and Systems Change" workshop at the Black Community Fund's Vision Workshop 2.0 in Kansas City.
- **REACH DEIAB Policy Landscape Workshop:** CHCM team shared our organizational approach to embedding trauma-informed, equity-centered practices into policy design and advocacy strategies in a session offered to REACH Health Care Foundation grantees and community members.
- **Rise Up Youth Conference:** CHCM Implementation Manager engaged 20 young leaders in discussions about civic engagement and community organizing.
- **Advocacy 101 Workshop in partnership with SLATE:** Introduced youth participants to foundational advocacy concepts and the importance of raising their voices in public policy.



Workforce and Capacity Building



Goal: Cultivate a diverse, equity-centered, and trauma-informed public health and health care workforce through pipeline programs, capacity-building trainings, and establishing formalized fellowships.

Youth Pipeline & Training

East Side Aligned Youth Institute (Summer 2025):

The East St. Louis Youth Institute, hosted by East Side Aligned in partnership with CHCM, brought together young leaders for a week of healing, connection, and empowerment. Through interactive workshops, youth explored the impact of trauma, practiced new coping tools, and discovered the power of using their voices for change. Healing circles and peer learning were named as some of the most powerful parts of the Institute, creating space for reflection, connection, and resilience. Youth left not only with knowledge about trauma in their communities, but with a renewed sense of pride, purpose, and responsibility.

- 16 youth from East St. Louis participated in a one-week trauma-informed empowerment institute co-led by CHCM and ESA.
- Participants reported increased knowledge of trauma, coping strategies, and emotional regulation, along with stronger self-efficacy and leadership skills.
- Healing circles created safe spaces for sharing, reflection, and peer connection. "Instead of 'what's wrong with you,' how about 'what happened?' Like actually take time to understand people."
- Youth expressed intentions to advocate in schools, lead peer sessions, and envision community change projects.
- Evaluation results showed increases across knowledge, self-confidence, and empowerment, even in a short program window.



Workforce and Capacity Building

Building on that momentum, this year's Racial Equity Summit, hosted by our partners at Forward Through Ferguson, was full of powerful conversations and community-led visioning.

CHCM hosted a session spotlighting our youth programming, featuring young leaders from our Youth Ambassadors program and participants in the East St. Louis Youth Institute. These youth spoke powerfully about their experiences, their visions for the future, and the Missouri we're dreaming together.

“

I think my voice and story matter because what I've been through can help others understand that they're not alone.”

“And yes, I had trauma, but now I know how I can handle it and I know I have to heal from it. And I just can't push it to the side.”

“I just feel like we should have more Youth Programs for kids around my age because this program was very helpful and most kids don't understand the real meaning of stress and trauma.”

- CHCM Youth Ambassadors





“

Just changing the question from 'what's wrong with you?' to 'what happened to you?' is a different perspective... I'm gonna use an example... walking up to a kid and asking what's wrong with them. They could view it as like a judgmental question, I guess you would say, but asking 'what happened to you?' is more of coming off as, dang, I really care."

- ESA Youth Participant

“

A moment I felt really heard was when we actually got the chance to talk to our district leaders and the people who could actually make changes in our neighborhood and in our schools — they were actually listening to what we had to say."

- CHCM Youth Ambassador

Workforce and Capacity Building

In addition to our youth panel, CHCM was proud to have several of our leaders take the stage to highlight critical issues at the intersection of equity, health, and justice. CEO Riisa Rawlins moderated a compelling panel on birth equity, exploring how systems can better center Black mothers and families.

On another stage, Aja Owens and Kayla Thompson—two St. Louis creatives and CHCM team members—shared their perspectives on the role of arts in advancing justice and community healing.

“

Storytelling through the arts is a powerful antidote to white supremacy. Especially in this moment—when so many stories are being rewritten, erased, or deemed unimportant—telling our own stories matters.”

- Kayla Thompson, MEd



Workforce and Capacity Building

Capacity Building Trainings

REACH DEIAB Capacity Building Workshops (April–August 2025):

- 5 sessions delivered with 114 total attendees from nonprofit and community organizations
- Topics included resilience in advocacy work, navigating anti-DEI policy shifts, inclusive leadership, and data-informed practices

Impact Results:

- **100%** of participants reported increased knowledge of policy impacts on DEIAB efforts
- **93%** felt more confident ensuring equitable representation
- **87%** learned at least one new strategy for community engagement
- Quotes highlighted the value of connection and collaboration: "The need to collect the data, tell the stories, and keep doing the work."



Workforce and Capacity Building

Missouri Model Implementation

Schools

Kansas City Public Schools (KCPS) made a strategic commitment last year to deepen its trauma-informed practices by formally engaging with the Missouri Model. Through this process, the district conducted a thorough self-assessment and identified four key indicators that represented significant opportunities for growth.

Rather than treating this as a stopping point, KCPS has used this year to take action — aligning leadership, staff development, and systems work to develop targeted solutions for each of these indicators. This deliberate approach reflects the district's commitment to becoming a trauma-informed system, not just in policy but in day-to-day practice. While this is ongoing work, the clarity gained through the MO-Model process has been foundational in shaping KCPS's direction, focus, and accountability around trauma-informed transformation.

Staff Reflections: How has the Missouri Model helped your school district on their trauma-informed journey?

- "It has helped us bring some of our systemic inefficiencies to the surface and allow us to have real conversations about things."
- "It has helped by providing a guideline to the journey, a starting point, a reference and it helps keep us aligned in our mission."



Building Trauma-Informed Schools for Students and Staff

- "Meeting staff and students where they are and having trauma-informed strategies in place will help the overall work atmosphere as well as improve student achievement."
- "For students, it creates safe, empathetic spaces that address trauma from poverty or violence, boosting engagement and academic outcomes. For staff, it fosters a supportive culture, reducing burnout and equipping them to handle challenges with compassion and empathy."
- "It contributes to the success of the students because we are able to have a more humanistic approach when working with them, we are able to build relationship and show genuine care and concern for another human life. It helps because the students know or understand that someone cares. Students are able to feel safe."
- "Understanding and responding to the effects of trauma, schools can create a safer, more supportive environment where students feel more secure and ready to engage in learning."

Through this work, KCPS is cultivating a district culture where both students and staff feel valued, supported, and understood.

Workforce and Capacity Building

Health care

Freeman Health System Family Medicine in Joplin, Missouri, is partnering with CHCM to implement the Missouri Model for Trauma-Informed Health care Institutions, a framework that helps hospitals and clinics create organizational change to build cultures of safety, trust, and healing. Over the past two years, CHCM has worked closely with Freeman's Family Medicine leadership and staff to lay the groundwork for this transformation, providing foundational training, reflection, and capacity building that have already begun to shape day-to-day practice.

To begin the next phase of implementation, CHCM conducted an introductory site visit centered on the Six Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach, using them as a lens to observe strengths and opportunities across the organization.

While Freeman has not yet developed formal action plans aligned to the Missouri Model, what stood out during the site visit was the system's intentionality and thoughtfulness in decision-making, for both patient care and staff support. Across the Family Medicine clinic, staff demonstrated a clear commitment to creating environments where both patients and providers feel safe, respected, and supported.

Freeman's approach to safety, trustworthiness, and transparency was evident in its patient interactions and operational practices. Patients are encouraged to express what makes them feel safe, and requests to change providers are honored without hesitation. Efforts to maintain confidentiality and privacy—such as design choices in waiting areas and careful handling of sensitive conversations—reflect a strong foundation of trauma-informed awareness, even before formalized planning begins.

Freeman also reflects a culture of partnership and inclusion, where shared decision-making and community engagement are central to how care is delivered. The Patient and Family Advisory Council provides ongoing opportunities for patients to share feedback, and experiential learning through community rotations connects residents directly to the social realities that shape health. These practices reflect a growing understanding that healing happens not only within exam rooms, but also through meaningful relationships between health care providers, patients, and the communities they serve.

Freeman Family Medicine's engagement with the Missouri Model represents an important first step toward embedding trauma-informed care system-wide. By grounding its work in reflection, partnership, and patient voice, the organization is positioning itself to build a health care environment where safety, trust, and equity are integral to every level of care.



Workforce and Capacity Building

Fellowships & Internships

- **4 completed and 1 ongoing** fellowship within the past year
- Fellows contributed to core priorities including **storytelling, evaluation, policy advocacy, and youth voice integration**

Fall 2024 Fellowship

Madelon Jensen

(UMSL Coro fellow) - contributed to policy mobilization, voter education materials, and blogs on ballot initiatives. Madelon was a member of the Coro fellowship, a month, graduate-level experiential learning program for aspiring civic leaders.



I'm proud of creating voter education materials at [CHCM]. I learned a lot from my supervisors about health literacy, and it helped me feel confident during my first few months in the program."



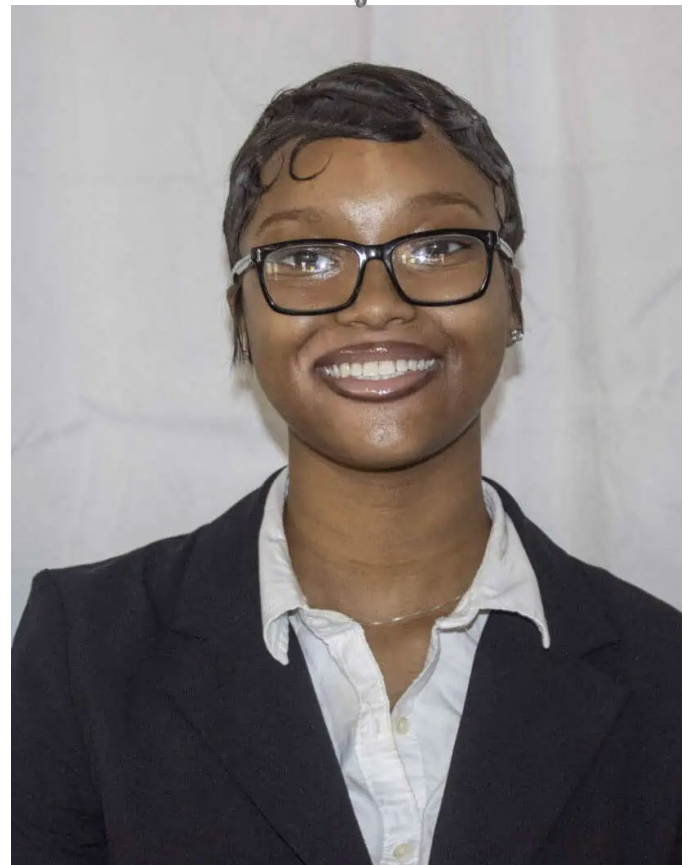
Summer 2025 Fellows

Lori G.

(Boys & Girls Club intern, rising junior) – shared her learning in two CHCM blogs, highlighting youth perspectives on health care and organizational roles.

“

As I reflect on my summer, I feel grateful to have been part of a team where every single person plays such a powerful role. Everyone I spoke to helped me see a different side of advocacy, leadership, care, and impact. Whether it was through planning, data, storytelling, or policy they all showed me how change really happens from inside out. These are lessons I will forever cherish.”



“

Nonprofit organizations like CHCM play a great role in making sure that people feel heard, seen, and secure. I absolutely encourage other young people to speak up and collaborate with their communities because fresh perspectives can really help make a difference.”

Summer 2025 Fellows

Sandra Agyenim-Boateng & Alice Igisaro

(Brown School MPH fellows) – advanced work in Medicaid storytelling, EC-TIC evaluation, and data analysis.

Varsha Arun

(Johns Hopkins graduate, current master's student) – extended her yearlong role supporting storytelling and evaluation while preparing for medical school.



“

My practicum was truly transformative and meaningful. I was able to work on things I genuinely cared about, like advocating for access to health care and exploring equity-centered, trauma-informed care tools (an area that first drew me to CHCM and one I was eager to learn more about.)

I also appreciated how the environment itself felt welcoming and human; meetings weren't just about tasks, but about connecting, listening, and creating space for different voices and perspectives. That made the work feel real and grounded.

What I found a bit challenging, but also rewarding, was reminding myself that this wasn't just an academic exercise. The projects I worked on had real implications, whether through a one-pager that could reach communities and policymakers or a tool analysis that could guide future practice. Holding that responsibility gave the work a weight that was sometimes daunting, but it also made the experience deeply fulfilling.”

- Alice Igisaro, Brown School MPH fellow



Fall 2025 Fellowship

Cristina Marquez, LCSW, LSCSW

2025–2026 Doctoral Student Policy Fellow partnering with CHCM to develop a case study on the power of storytelling and shared decision-making in Missouri.



Impact Highlights

- CHCM continues to strengthen Missouri's future workforce through pipeline youth programs, graduate-level fellowships, and capacity building partnerships.
- Across initiatives, participants consistently report increased knowledge, confidence, and motivation to embed equity-centered, trauma-informed practices in their communities and organizations.
- The dual focus on youth empowerment and organizational capacity positions CHCM as a leader in shaping a resilient, equity-driven public health workforce.

Publications and Awards

Website Launch & Recognition

In April 2025, CHCM proudly launched its new website, chcmisrael.org — a comprehensive digital hub designed to reflect who we are today: a statewide organization advancing health equity through community voice, data, and storytelling.

The site brings CHCM's refreshed brand and mission to life through clear structure, accessible design, and a cohesive visual experience that connects users to our work, partners, and resources across Missouri.



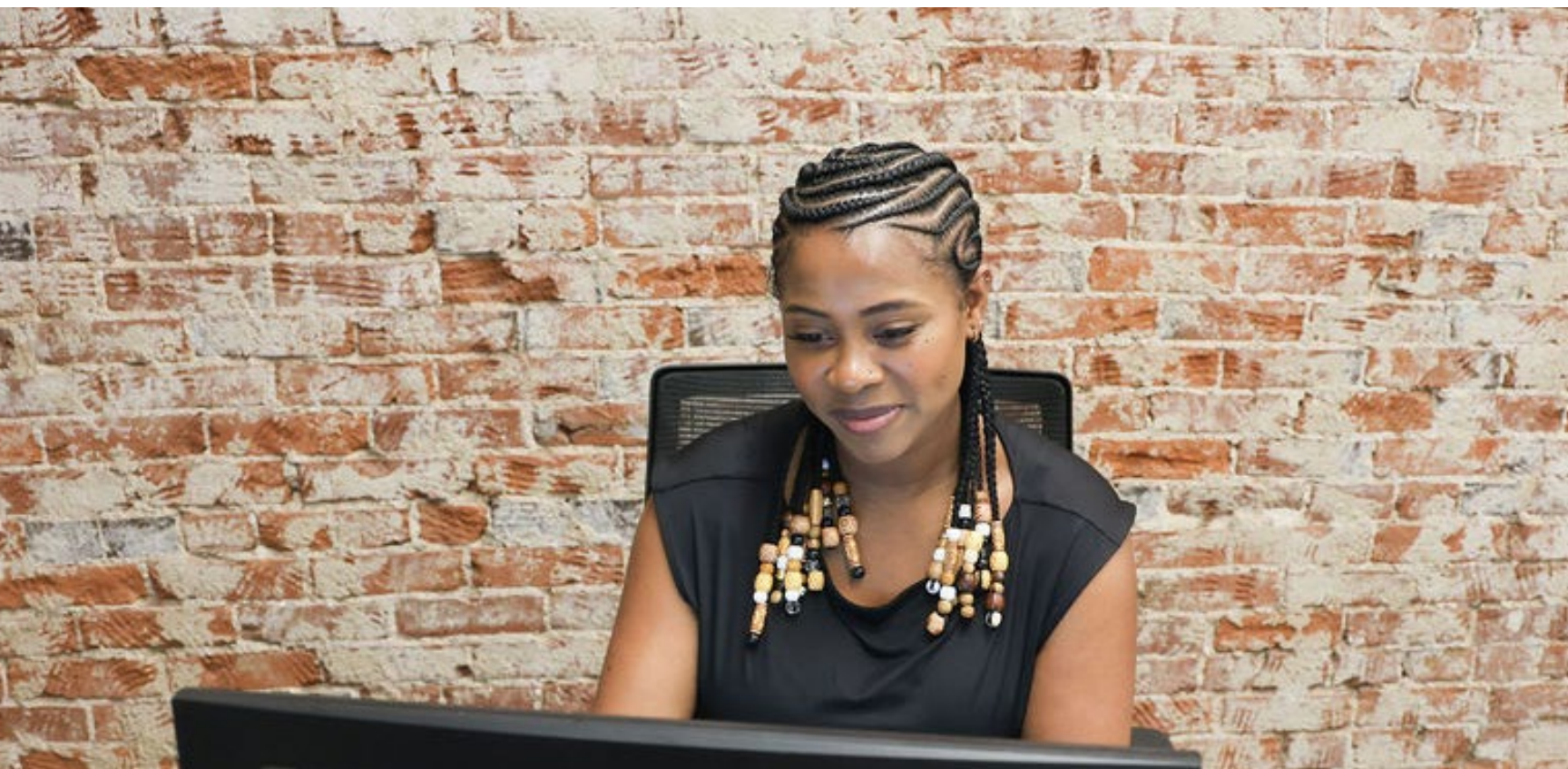
Just months after launch, the site was honored with a **Silver W³ Award**, a national recognition celebrating excellence

Publications and Awards

Grantmakers in Health Publication

In a compelling piece for Grantmakers In Health's (GIH) "Views from the Field," our CEO, **Riisa R. Rawlins**, explores how participatory budgeting (PB) can revolutionize health philanthropy by shifting decision-making power directly to those most affected by health disparities. Drawing from CHCM's successful Seniors Community Revitalization & Development Fund pilot, she illustrates how PB fosters transparency, trust, and community-driven impact.

This approach not only aligns funding with real community needs but also strengthens partnerships and ensures sustainable investments in health equity. As traditional funding models face challenges, PB emerges as a resilient, data-informed strategy to advance equity and empower communities.



Publications and Awards

Bulletin of the History of Medicine Publication

We also celebrate **Dr. Danielle Binion, CHCM's Chief Strategy Officer**, whose latest scholarly work, **"Just Listen to Us": The Role of Oral Histories in Decolonizing Academic Medicine**, was published in the Bulletin of the History of Medicine (Winter 2024, Volume 98, Number 4). In this powerful piece, Dr. Binion and her colleagues explore how oral histories can serve as critical tools for confronting systemic racism in medical education.

The article highlights community-driven storytelling as a means to document harm, elevate marginalized voices, and chart paths for authentic repair in academic health centers.



Dr. Binion's work stands as a testament to the transformative power of community engagement and the importance of centering lived experiences in the journey toward health equity.





Appendices

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Acknowledgements

This report was written and led by Grace Cobble, with data contributions from Molly Downing and Dr. Courtney Dowdall. Oversight and editorial support were provided by CHCM leadership: Riisa R. Rawlins, Dr. Danielle Binion, and Velva Hollimon. Design support was provided by our partners at Grace Advertising & Consulting, Inc.

Most importantly, we extend our deepest gratitude to the community members, partners, and organizations who make this work possible. Thank you for showing up, for attending every event, town hall, training, workshop, and healing circle, for sharing your voices, stories, and lived wisdom, and for continuing to walk with us toward equity and healing.

We are also deeply thankful to our funders and supporters for your trust, partnership, and investment, for fueling this work, engaging in our action alerts, and believing in community-led change.



“

CHCM exists to bridge the wisdom of community with the influence of systems—to create space where shared power, trust, and accountability can transform the conditions that shape health. We know that achieving zero health disparities requires more than good intentions; it requires courage, collaboration, and collective action.”

Riisa Rawlins, MSW

CHCM Chief Executive Officer





CHCMissouri.org