

**Health & Medicine**  
POLICY RESEARCH GROUP

**Health & Medicine Policy Research Group**

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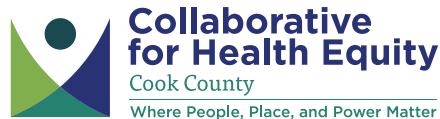
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**COOK COUNTY HEALTH EQUITY GROUP CHOSEN FOR NATIONAL LEADERSHIP TRAINING**

Chicago, Illinois, September 12, 2016—Health & Medicine Policy Research Group and the Collaborative for Health Equity Cook County are pleased to announce that a four-person team representing their organizations was selected today by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to participate in their *Culture of Health Leaders* initiative, a three-year national leadership development program targeting sharp health inequities along lines of race and income.

"I congratulate our Cook County team in being selected for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation *Culture of Health Leaders* program," said Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle. "Achieving health equity is a top priority for Cook County government and this team will work across sectors to help us make progress in combatting the health inequities that harm disadvantaged people in our communities."

Fielded by the Collaborative for Health Equity Cook County, team members Maxx Boykin, Wesley Eplin, Lilian Jimenez, and Felipe Tendick-Matesanz are four of the 40 applicants selected for the *Culture of Health Leaders*, a new program co-led by the National Collaborative for Health Equity and CommonHealth ACTION with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The team will join leaders from across the country to participate in leadership development training and to collaborate and innovate to solve persistent challenges and advance a Culture of Health—one that places well-being at the center of every aspect of life.

"This team exemplifies the multi-sector, social justice approach that research shows is needed to bring the United States population health indicators in line with other industrialized countries," said Health and Medicine's Executive Director Margie Schaps. "We're proud to serve as the fiscal sponsor for this exemplary team and to have our Director of Health Equity Wesley Eplin among the group. The team's efforts over the next three years will complement Health & Medicine's work to improve the health of all people in Illinois and promote health equity."

"Optimizing health and achieving health equity for all people and communities of Cook County is a goal for this program and a core mission of the health department. I congratulate this group of emerging leaders and welcome their contribution to this important work," said Dr. Terry Mason, Chief Operating Officer of the Cook County Department of Public Health, which formed the Collaborative over ten years ago. The

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Collaborative for Health Equity works to eliminate structural racism by advocating for policy and building power among low income communities of color of to address the root causes of stark and unacceptable health inequities that disproportionately affect people of color.

“The inspiration and vision these leaders bring to our program is astounding, and they come at health and equity from every angle,” said Brian Smedley, *Culture of Health Leaders* co-director and executive director and co-founder of the National Collaborative for Health Equity. “They will redefine the way leaders in every field use their innovation and influence to shatter the status quo on health in our country.”

*Culture of Health Leaders* is one of four new leadership development programs launched this year by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation that together represent a four-year, multimillion dollar investment. The programs join five existing leadership programs in advancing RWJF’s legacy of supporting the development and diversity of leaders impacting health. The 2017 application period for the new programs will open in January. Additional information is available at [www.cultureofhealth-leaders.org](http://www.cultureofhealth-leaders.org).

#### **About Health & Medicine Policy Research Group**

Health & Medicine is a Chicago based non-profit working to improve the health of all people in Illinois by promoting health equity. Founded in 1981 by Dr. Quentin Young, it was formed as an action-oriented policy center—nimble, independent, and focused on regional health issues. Health & Medicine’s mission is to promote social justice and challenge inequities in health and health care. It conducts research, educates, and collaborates with other groups to advocate policies and impact health systems to improve the health status of all people. Health & Medicine has successfully developed health policy recommendations and implementation strategies for different public and private entities, earning the trust of the legislature, advocates, the media, researchers, and policymakers at all levels of government in Illinois to become the region’s “honest broker” on healthcare policy matters.

#### **About the Collaborative for Health Equity Cook County**

The Collaborative for Health Equity was formed by the Cook County Health Department and for the last ten years has received its support. The Collaborative works to eliminate structural racism so that all people of Cook County have the opportunity to live healthy lives. The release of the group’s report in 2012 garnered attention from Board President Toni Preckwinkle and Commissioner Jesus Garcia, and documented a 14-year difference in life expectancy between residents from the most affluent neighborhoods compared to people living in the lowest income neighborhoods. Collaborative participant Linda Rae Murray, an instructor at the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health, is an advisor to 18 other initiatives in the National Collaborative for Health Equity.

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