

INSTITUTE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF MINORITY HEALTH COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

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Safeguarding the Public's Health Today, Tomorrow and in the Future



Sandra C. Melvin,
DrPH, MPH,
Chief Executive Officer

Dear Friends and Partners,

Across the country, nonprofit organizations are carrying communities through some of their toughest moments—yet many of us are doing that work with fewer resources, rising costs, and growing needs. At the Institute for the Advancement of Minority Health, we see these challenges every day. I want to share how we're meeting them—and how, together, we can build a stronger future.

The Challenges Nonprofits Face

- **Funding volatility.** Grants are more competitive, timelines are shorter, and unrestricted dollars are scarce—making it hard to plan beyond today.
- **Workforce strain and burnout.** Mission-driven staff are stretched thin, juggling direct service, reporting, and constant adaptation.
- **Data demands without data capacity.** Funders and communities rightly ask for clear outcomes, but many organizations still lack the tools and training to measure impact efficiently and equitably.
- **Digital divide.** Technology costs, cybersecurity risks, and uneven access to broadband limit how we deliver programs and engage participants.
- **Trust and equity gaps.** Communities most affected by health disparities are often last to be heard and first to be overlooked in decision-making.

Solutions for a Stronger Future

Invest in resilient funding models. We're diversifying revenue—blending multi-year grants, mission-aligned corporate partnerships, and individual giving—while increasing reserves and pursuing more unrestricted support. This stability enables better planning, fair wages, and sustained programs.

Build people power. Our team is our greatest asset. We're prioritizing competitive compensation, professional development, and realistic workloads, alongside reflective supervision and wellness supports to reduce burnout and turnover.

Make data work for people. We're moving from compliance reporting to learning and improvement. That means right-sizing evaluation, using privacy-first data systems, and training staff and community partners to collect and interpret data in ways that advance equity—not just check a box.

Accelerate digital transformation. From secure telehealth and mobile outreach to multilingual SMS reminders and AI-assisted back-office tasks, technology can extend our reach and reduce administrative burden. We're investing in cybersecurity, user-friendly tools, and digital literacy so that technology opens doors rather than creates barriers.

Center community voice. We co-design programs with residents, faith leaders, and local organizations—compensating community experts for their time and expertise. When communities lead, solutions last.

Advance policy and partnerships. Sustainable change requires strong coalitions. We're working with public health agencies, schools, hospitals, and employers to align resources, eliminate duplication, and advocate for policies that remove structural barriers to health.

How You Can Help

- **Give flexibly.** Unrestricted gifts fuel innovation and keep proven programs running between grant cycles.
- **Partner with us.** If you're a business, faith community, or civic group, let's collaborate on programs that align with your mission and our expertise.
- **Advocate.** Use your voice to support policies that expand coverage, invest in prevention, and close equity gaps.
- **Volunteer your skills.** Data analysis, communications, language access, and technology support make a big difference.

The work ahead will require courage, creativity, and community. I'm confident that—together—we can turn today's challenges into tomorrow's breakthroughs and ensure every person has a fair chance at health and well-being.

Sandra Carr Melvin, DrPH, MPH, MLS

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandra C. Melvin".

Institute Impacts the Health Trajectory of Black Men in Mississippi

The third annual Black Men's Health Equity Conference was a day dedicated to health, empowerment and community connection. Over 140 attendees gathered on the campus of the historic Tougaloo College in the Bennie G. Thompson Academic & Civil Rights Research Center for free health screenings and panel discussions that addressed vital issues facing Black men today. Topics were chronic illness, mental health, environmental justice/climate change, and financial fitness.

Sessions included:

Breathe Easier, Live Longer: Advancing Black Men's Lung Cancer Health Equity in Mississippi Through Community Collaboration.

Panelists: Robert T. Lock, LPC, NTTPC, and Jimmie Wells, MSN, OCN.
Moderator: Beth Dickson-Gavney.

Scrubs to Strategy: The Future of Black Leadership in Medicine.

Panelists: Dr. Michael Jones; Patrick O. Jones, PhD; and Shelia Phicil, MPH, MS, PMP, FACHE.
Moderator: Dr. Joseph White.

Unhealed Wounds: Preventing Aggression and Healing Emotional Pain in Black Men.

Panelists: Joshua Jones and Sherika Rimmer-Higgins.
Moderator: Felicia Cameron, LCSW, SAP.

The Heart of the Matter: Cardiovascular-Kidney Metabolic Syndrome, Chronic Disease, and Health Solutions for Black Men.

Panelists: Erick Vicks, Patrick Gee, Dr. Lauren Williams, Nichole Jefferson, and Curtis Warfield. Moderator: Dr. Jameshyia S. Ballard.

Unseen, Untreated: Black Men, Chronic Disease, and the Path to Prevention.

Panelists: Dr. Stephen Farrow and Kenneth R. Butler Jr., PhD.
Moderator: Dr. Carl Reddix.

Toxic Truths: Unmasking Environmental Injustice, Climate and Class, and its Power Over Black Men's Health.

Panelists: Felicia Tripp and Dr. Krystal Nicole Martin, PhD.
Moderator: Mac Epps.

He Ain't Heavy: Lifting the Burden of Trauma and Mental Health in Black Men.

Panelists: Ja'Ron Brown, LCSW; Frederick Rodgers; Ruth Drake, LCSW; and Dr. Bernell L. Elzey Jr. Moderator: Kimar Cain.

Beyond the Chair: Advancing Black Men's Health Through Barbershop Initiatives.

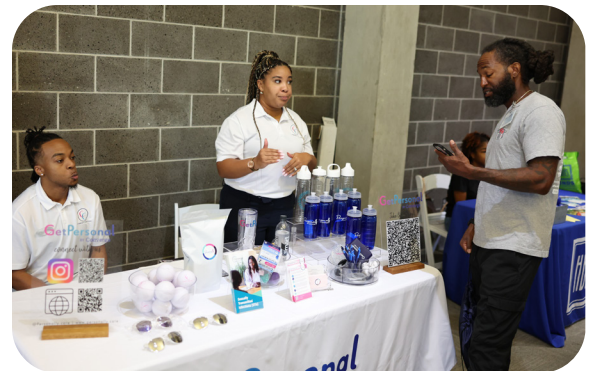
Panelists: Warren Jones and Border-ere Fiemotonghan.
Moderator: Markyel Pittman.

Do Your Dollars Have Sense? Practical Tools for Financial Stability and Growth.

Panelists: Torey Phillips and Tamara Williams.
Moderator: Lisa Gaspard.

CONFERENCE VENDORS:

- Greater Greener Gloster
- Converge Partners and Access
- Six Dimensions
- LunGevity Foundation
- Hinds Behavioral Health Services
- Lending My Hand
- Magnolia Medical Foundation
- One Voice
- The Mind Center at the University of Mississippi Medical Center



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- United Way of the Capital Area
- H.E.A.L. Mississippi
- Mississippi MOVE
- SheCor Cares
- Black with No Chaser
- The Jackson Advocate-Media Sponsor
- Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Rho Lambda Omega Chapter

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Keynote speaker and political commentator Roland Martin did not come to play as he addressed the conference attendees. “Black family health secrets are killing Black families because too many people don’t know their health history and are being targeted by fast food marketing in their communities.” Martin also challenged the audience to take action. He asked each man to write down the names of ten other Black men they could talk with about their health, encourage them to complete screenings and doctor visits, and then urge those men to do the same.

The goal, he explained, is to build a chain of meaningful conversations about health—moving beyond small talk

about sports to life-saving discussions that strengthen families and communities. “We men have the capacity in our groups to have personal health conversations with each other, like women do. Men are conditioned to think that talking about our health concerns is a sign of weakness. We don’t participate in clinical trials. If I hear about the Tuskegee experiment one more time! That should not prevent us from participating in clinical trials. Black men are dying early because we do not go to the doctor, even when we have insurance.”

Black men are suffering in silence about our health issues he added. “We are not being honest about our health problems. We can and need to make micro changes at the local level, in one city, one neighborhood, one block, one street, and one household. We need to become personal change agents regarding our own health and the health of our families.”

Since its launch in 2023, attendance at the conference has steadily increased. The growth also reflects how the conference has quickly become a cornerstone for advancing conversations on health disparities and creating pathways to healthier futures for Black men in Mississippi and beyond.

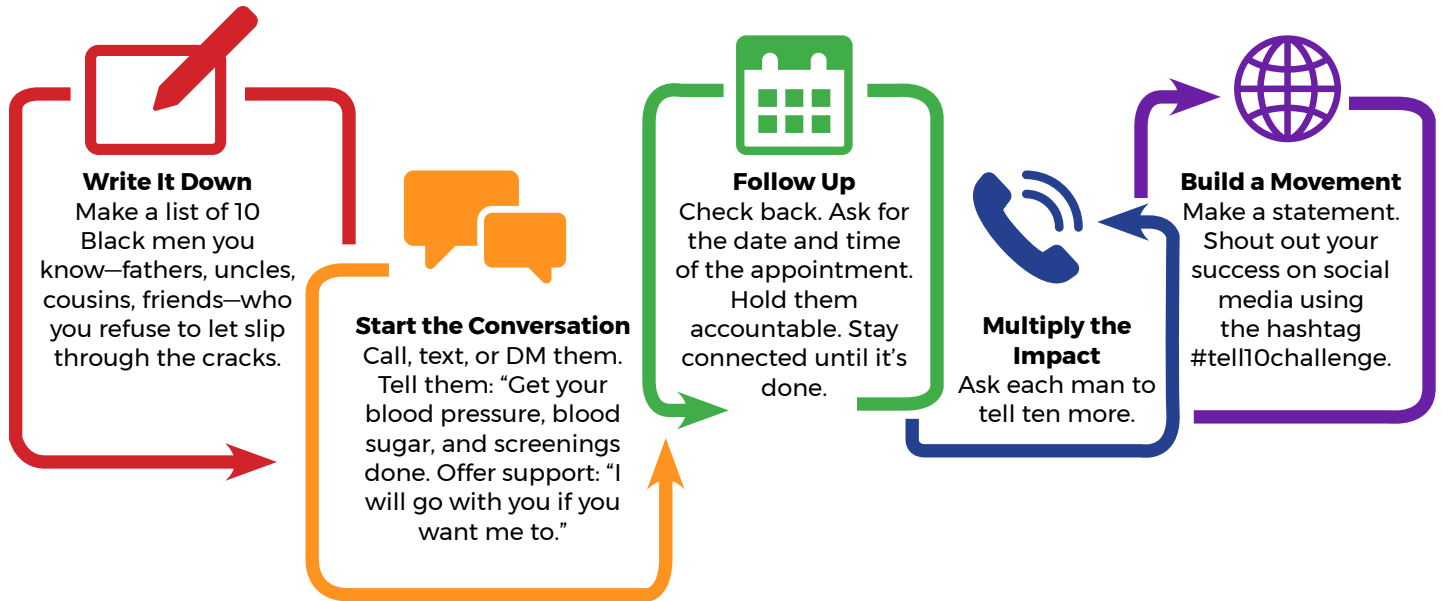


It is Time to Tell Ten

During the keynote at the 3rd Annual Black Men's Health Equity Conference, award-winning journalist Roland Martin challenged attendees to Tell Ten. In response to Martin's challenge, the Institute for the Advancement of Minority Health has launched the Tell Ten Challenge.

During his speech, Martin emphasized that change begins with simple, intentional steps that each man can take to protect his health and impact the health of others. These changes will eventually impact the health of the city and state.

Tell Ten Challenge – How it Works



"The Tell Ten Challenge is about accountability and action," Martin said. "If every brother tells ten more, we create a chain reaction that can save lives." Fraternities, barbershops, churches, and local organizations are encouraged to join the challenge. For more information on the Tell Ten Challenge and how to get involved, visit www.minority-institute.org/telltenchallenge.



TELLTEN Challenge

June 2025

Expectant and New Moms invited to Mommy Meet-Up

Over a dozen expectant and new mothers gathered for a Mommy Meet-Up at the Greenwood-Leflore Public Library on Monday, June 30, 2025. Sponsored by the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC) and the Institute for the Advancement of Minority Health, attendees received information and essentials to welcome their bundle of joy. Courtney Lumpkin, an expectant mother of three, said it was her first time attending a meeting of this type. "It is definitely great to have support from other people who are able to relate to things that you are going through or may experience," said Lumpkin.

Attendees received free baby items such as diapers, wipes and bottles. "We want to provide the necessities that they need to have a healthy baby," said LaTasha Rice, program manager. "We talked about different programs that we have available and provided access to various resources." Additionally, attendees were provided with information regarding breastfeeding, and the Greenwood Fire Department gave an overview of infant CPR.



Men's Health Month

Institute Advances Black Men's Wellness via Yoga and Pilates

Inhale. Exhale. Begin. IAMH celebrated Men's Health Month with The Balanced Man, a new men's yoga/beginner Pilates experience built for balance and strength.

Held at Split Rebel Yoga Studio on Sunday, June 1, 2025, the event welcomed over twenty-five men from across the Metro Jackson area into a supportive, judgment-free environment focused on total-body wellness. Maya Morris, owner of Split Rebel Yoga, guided participants through an energizing sequence of Sun Salutations, introductory Pilates movements, and the calming stillness of Savasana. The sixty-minute session featured journaling prompts, affirmations, and interactive group discussions.

Free chair massages and a cellist created a relaxing vibration for attendees. Kimar Cain, an experienced yogi who helped develop the concept for the class, emphasized the importance of a holistic approach to health. "This class is important because our brothers need to be well, and that means understanding that health is more than just physical," said Cain. "It is essential that men take care of their mental, spiritual, and emotional well-being. Practices like yoga and Pilates, combined with heart-to-heart conversations, can help us grow, heal, and become better men."



Kimar Cain and Warren Jones, Institute epidemiologist, participated in the Balanced Man yoga/Pilates session during Men's Health Month.

The Balanced Man was the first experience with yoga or Pilates for nearly all participants. "This was my first exposure to yoga and Pilates," said Warren Jones, an epidemiologist with the Institute for the Advancement of Minority Health. "Men—particularly Black men—must engage in self-care practices. Relieving stress through movement, breathwork, and meditation can help reduce the physical health disparities that impact our community. Thanks to the leadership of our CEO, Dr. Sandra Melvin, the Institute remains innovative and forward-thinking in our mission to reduce health disparities."



D'Anah Evans at National HIV Testing Day.

National HIV Testing Day Provides Access and Raises Awareness (HIV)

Walgreens and the Institute for the Advancement of Minority Health (IAMH) joined forces on National HIV Testing Day. Held on June 27, 2025, in Cleveland, MS, more than 100 residents received free HIV and STI testing.

National HIV Testing Day raises awareness about HIV prevention, reduces stigma around testing, and encourages open conversations about sexual health. It also empowered participants to take control of their health.

Through this effort, IAMH reinforced its commitment to accessible, community-based education and prevention. To receive an HIV self-test kit, visit minority-institute.org/infectiousdisease.

Health and Wellness Took Center Stage in June

The Institute for the Advancement of Minority Health was proud to serve as a sponsor of the 2025 Healthy MS Conference, held June 4-6 in Flowood, MS. This annual gathering brought together more than ninety participants, including public health professionals, community leaders, and advocates committed to advancing health and wellness across the state.

The three-day conference created an important platform for dialogue and collaboration, offering attendees the opportunity to share best practices, highlight successful initiatives, and explore innovative strategies for improving health outcomes. In addition to informative sessions, the conference fostered conversations around reducing disparities, strengthening community partnerships, and building a healthier Mississippi for all.

Later in the month, the Institute for the Advancement of Minority Health was a vendor during the Second Annual State Employee Wellness Expo. Hosted by the Mississippi State Department of Health, the expo was held June 11, 2025, at the Trade Mart Center in Jackson, MS. Designed to foster wellness, connection, and healthy living among Mississippi's state employees, the Institute connected with twenty-four attendees. Staff shared information about Institute programs and provided preventive health resources.



Miracle Vance and Peggy Jones were in attendance at the Healthy MS Conference on behalf of the Institute.

Support for Unhoused Continues

Over four months, IAMH and St. Paul Church of God in Christ served 137 men at the Billy Brumfield Shelter with meals, hygiene kits, and vital health education. Because health still matters, even when life is unstable.



July 2025

School Supply Drive Helps Local Students

The Institute for the Advancement of Minority Health, in partnership with Word and Worship Church, collected hundreds of school supply items to help students across the Metro Jackson area start the new school year prepared. Church members, state health agencies, and community organizations dropped off notebooks, pencils, crayons, glue, and other classroom necessities at Word and Worship Church located at 2686 Hanging Moss Road in Jackson, MS. The collected items were distributed to local schools and community partners who serve families in need.



Administrative staff serves the community, too. Mya Hayes and Akita Campbell assist with sorting school supplies collected this summer.

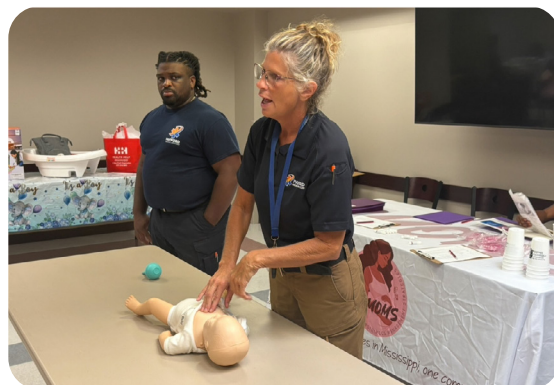
Advancing Health Equity in the Spirit of ‘Good Trouble’

The Institute and several other Mississippi nonprofits participated in Good Trouble Lives On. Held from 4 p.m.-8 p.m., July 17, 2025, at Duling Hall (Jackson, MS), the event honors the legacy of Congressman John Lewis and aims to promote nonviolent action in defense of civil and human rights. Vendors highlighted issues on maternal health, men’s health, veteran’s rights, and immigration. The fifty-six attendees present were encouraged to join in community building and discussions regarding American’s voting rights and the right to protest.



Community Baby Shower offers CPR and Free Infant Essentials

Expectant mothers in the Mississippi Delta received both celebration and support at a Community Baby Shower held on July 28, 2025. The Institute for the Advancement of Minority Health (IAMH), in partnership with UMMC-RMS, hosted the event at Northwest Mississippi Regional Medical Center in Clarksdale. More than 40 women attended the shower. Guests received free baby supplies, participated in an infant CPR class, and connected with community partners. The event was designed to meet both emotional and health needs of moms-to-be and to better equip them to care for their babies.



August 2025 Resource Fair Held for Area Moms

Jackson Metro area moms-to-be gathered at the Jackson Medical Mall on August 16, 2025, for the Baby & Beyond: A Mommy-to-Be Resource Fair. Hosted by the Institute for the Advancement of Minority Health, this event provided resources and support to help 30 families prepare for the arrival of their little ones. The free resource fair featured interactive sessions on breastfeeding, infant CPR, car seat installation, and prenatal yoga. In addition to educational sessions, participants received free diapers, various baby essentials, and door prizes. The event connected families with healthcare providers, community programs, and essential baby items.



Institute Staff Members visit U.S. Office of Health and Human Services

On August 25-27, 2025, Maternal and Child Health staff, Latasha Rice and TraKendria Barnes represented the Institute for the Advancement of Minority Health during a site visit at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in Rockville, Maryland. Their visit was part of the Rural Maternity and Obstetrics Management Strategies (RMOMS) grant program. This grant supports the Institute's work to improve maternal health outcomes while expanding access to care in rural areas. During the site visit, Rice and Barnes engaged with fellow HHS grantees, shared best practices, and explored strategies to help reduce infant mortality in underserved communities. Their participation highlighted IAMH's commitment to advancing maternal and child health in Mississippi. The Institute for the Advancement of Minority Health currently implements the RMOMS program with three clinical sites in the Mississippi Delta.



MCH staff Latasha Rice and TraKendria Barnes enjoyed their recent visit with HRSA.

Taco About Giving Back: A Birthday Celebration with Purpose

Who says birthdays are cake and candles? For Miracle Vance, it was all about tacos, kindness, and community. On August 23, Miracle turned her birthday into an opportunity to uplift others by hosting a special community feeding event, "Taco About Giving Back." Rather than focusing solely on her own celebration, Miracle and her family dedicated the day to serving some of the most vulnerable members of our community, those experiencing housing insecurity.

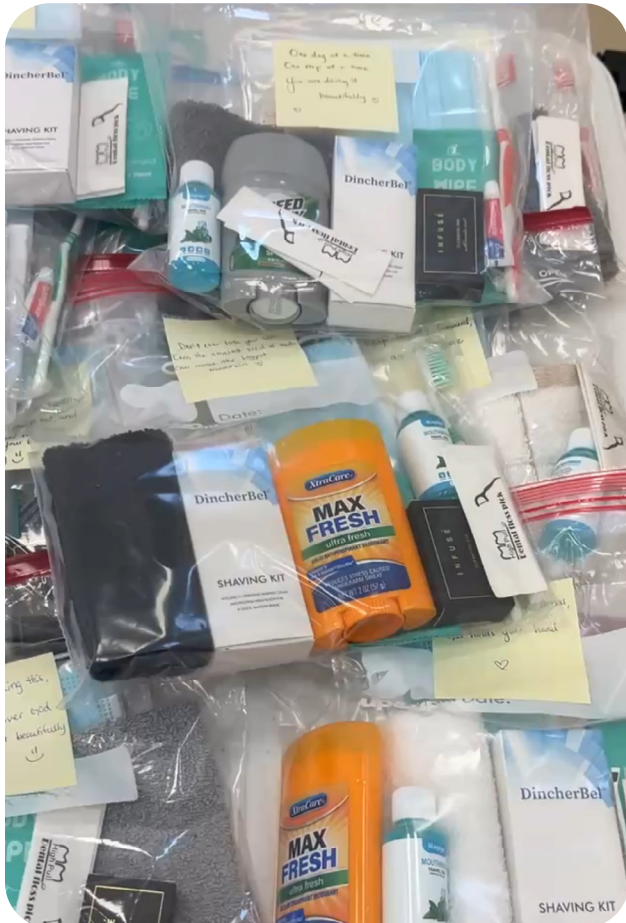
Held in Pittman Park, the event combined food, fellowship, and compassion. Guests were welcomed with warm smiles and hearty plates of tacos and sides, along with personal hygiene packs carefully prepared by volunteers. For many attendees, it was not just a meal, but a reminder that they are seen, valued, and cared for.

Through this effort, Miracle and her family were able to serve more than 165 individuals and families. The atmosphere was filled with gratitude, laughter, and heartfelt conversations, as neighbors connected and shared in the spirit of generosity.

The day's impact went beyond the food distributed. For participants, the gathering offered dignity and kindness—gifts that often mean as much as a full plate. For Miracle, it was a meaningful way to celebrate her life by giving back to others, embodying the belief that true joy comes from service.

"We wanted to do something that would make a difference, something that reflected the values of love and community," Miracle shared. "Seeing the smiles on people's faces and knowing they left with full stomachs and full hearts made this the best birthday gift I could have asked for."

The Institute for the Advancement of Minority Health is deeply grateful to Miracle and her family for this extraordinary example of compassion in action. Taco About Giving Back is a reminder that when individuals come together with generosity of spirit, lives can be touched and communities strengthened.



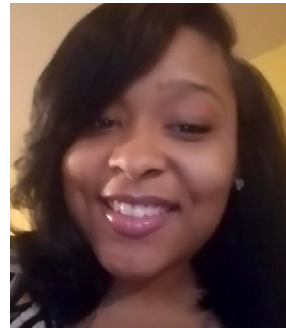
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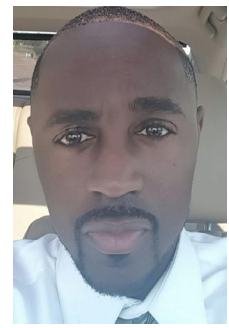
Sandra C. Melvin,
DrPH, MPH,
Chief Executive Officer



Akita Campbell
Office Manager/
Executive Assistant



Chasitie Webster
Human Resource Director



Ra'Shad Jones
Accounts Payable
Specialist



Mya Hayes
Grant Management Specialist



Marilyn Reed
Director of Communications



Frederick Smith
Webmaster/Social Media
Manager



Kendria Barnes,
Epidemiologist II



LaTasha Rice
Program Manager



Shelethia Whisenton
Program Manager



Markyel Pittman
Program Manager



Peggie Jones
Community Outreach Specialist



Warren Jones, MPH
Epidemiologist



Miracle Vance
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D'Anah Evans
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The Community Connection is a quarterly snapshot of the work happening at the Institute for the Advancement of Minority Health. Each issue is designed to keep our partners, stakeholders, and community members informed about our mission, vision, and impact.

From the MS Delta to Central Mississippi and beyond, our programs tackle critical health issues such as maternal and child health, chronic disease and health equity, men's health, and infectious disease.

We invite you to join us in this important work. By volunteering your time, partnering with our programs, or contributing resources, you become part of a collective effort to uplift underrepresented voices and empower families across Mississippi to live healthier lives.

Visit minority-institute.org/donations to support our mission. Click the icons below and follow us on all social platforms to stay connected.

