

Meridian Health Plan of Illinois Awards more than \$850,000 in Health Happens Here Grants™ in the First Half of 2024 - Jul 31, 2024

*Awards to 14 organizations promote health equity in communities throughout Illinois*

CHICAGO, July 31, 2024 /PRNewswire/ -- [Meridian Health Plan of Illinois, Inc.](#) (Meridian), a provider of government-sponsored managed care services to families, children, seniors, and individuals with complex medical needs and a [Centene](#) company, today announced it has awarded \$857,500 in *Health Happens Here Grants™* to 14 organizations in the first half of 2024. *Health Happens Here Grants* provide funds for local organizations throughout Illinois to close care gaps and address the health-related social needs of Meridian members and the community.

"We believe that better health outcomes result from caring for the whole person and their community," said Cristal Gary, Meridian Plan President and CEO. "These grants will support important services for seniors, maternal and child health, and health equity efforts. Awards will also aid unhoused people, immunization events for students, and cultural events and outreach. By supporting these organizations in delivering on their missions, we bring care, dignity, and respect to people and communities throughout Illinois."

These grants provide funds to local organizations throughout Illinois to help Meridian members and the community access high quality, culturally sensitive services. The organizations funded in the first half of 2024 include:

**[The Link & Option Center, Inc.](#)** – \$175,000 award

Meridian will fund two doula services to provide prenatal and postpartum care services to pregnant individuals within the organization's South Side Chicago service area for 12 months. The grant will allow doula services to start before Medicaid reimbursement begins. It will also fund doula training and certification, as well as training on how to bill Medicaid plans for services once coverage for doula services is implemented in Illinois. The Link & Option Center, Inc. provides a suite of prevention, mental health and addiction treatment, recovery support, and other public safety and human services for adults, seniors, children, and adolescents, as well as their families.

**[Roseland Community Hospital](#)** – \$150,000 award

Meridian's funding will assist in the ongoing operation of the hospital's mobile mammography unit, enabling it to reach even more Meridian members and communities. Meridian will host "Meridian Mondays" using the mobile units or at the hospital to partner with Roseland on breast cancer navigation by following up on members' positive screenings. The mobile mammography tomosynthesis (3D) van allows Meridian and Roseland to meet people where they are by bringing screening services onsite to community-based groups, nonprofits, churches, clinics, and other local organizations.

**[Southern Illinois University College of Medicine's Office of DEI](#)** – \$125,000 award

Funding will expand on the impact of a previous micro-grant from Meridian that supports projects at Southern Illinois University – School of Medicine's (SIUSOM) Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. These funds help provide diversity, equity, and inclusion curriculum for the next generation of health care providers.

**[Compass for Kids – Springfield](#)** - \$100,000 award

Compass for Kids' mission and vision is to provide academic and social-emotional support to children and families underserved in their community, ensuring that all children will experience success and reach their full potential through innovative after-school and summer programs. Committed to removing barriers to participation, including transportation, the grant will be used to purchase an 11-passenger van and a minivan.

**[The Outlet](#)** - \$100,000 award

The Outlet has offices in seven schools in District 186 Springfield, offering in-school mentoring services and after-school care for students. The Outlet's vision is to become the hub of youth development in the region focusing on mentoring, access to social emotional learning, family support, healthy eating and training others who work with local area young men and boys. The grant will help with renovating the new location in Springfield, serving youth ages 8-18 throughout the Springfield, Decatur, and Jacksonville area.

**[Children First Fund: The Chicago Public Schools Foundation](#)** - \$55,000 award

The Children First Fund creates ways for every Chicagoan to engage in the success of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) students and schools through philanthropy and partnerships. The organization connects CPS and its community of partners, including businesses, foundations, and individuals, matching resources with the students, schools, and staff that need them most. This award will support ten immunization/physical events, marketing and communications support to raise awareness of these events in their communities, and Coordinator/Data Entry support for scheduling and other administrative functions.

**[Franklin-Williamson Positive Youth Development](#)** - \$54,000 award

Meridian will be purchasing 2,000 back-to-school kits from Back 2 School America for the yearly back-to-school event. These kits include all the supplies a student may need for school and will be distributed at the Southern Illinois Back to School Expo

on Saturday, July 27. Last year this event served nearly 2,000 students and more than 2,500 adults. Attendees receive access to dozens of community resources as well as dental exams, health screenings, immunizations, school physicals, haircuts, clothing, food supplies, a hot lunch, entertainment and family activities, all for free.

**[Connections for the Homeless](#)** -- \$50,000 award

Connections for the Homeless delivers essential services to people facing homelessness and housing insecurity in the northern suburbs of Chicago. This award will assist with the organization's general operating support.

**[Hispanic Women of Springfield](#)** - \$25,000 award

Hispanic Women of Springfield is a non-profit organization offering a variety of resources and social activities to promote Hispanic culture and traditions and to provide a network for those who arrive in the Springfield community, including translation services; access to food, medication, utility and rental assistance; and immigration services. This award will support their cultural outreach and events for the 2nd half of 2024, such as back to school campaigns, Hispanic Heritage Month Fair, Community Closet, Meet and Great with Santa, and Latin Party Night.

**[Greater All Nations Tabernacle \(GANT\)](#)** - \$10,000 award

GANT Senior Luncheon program provides a monthly get-together at the Springfield Salvation Army for area seniors 55 years and over to experience a no-cost meal, health and wellness education, and social/emotional interaction with peers. The grant will help expand the GANT senior luncheon program to include a continental breakfast, games, art supplies for activities and prizes.

**[Mini O'Beirne Crisis Nursery](#)** - \$6,000 award

Mini O'Beirne Crisis Nursery provides emergency childcare and a no-cost essentials pantry for over 160 families in counties within a 60-mile radius of Springfield, including Sangamon, Menard, Christian and Morgan. The funding will help with purchasing diapers and wipes for the Nursery and the families served.

**[Infant Welfare Society of Chicago](#)** - \$5,000 award

Infant Welfare Society of Chicago provides a continuum of integrated, quality, and preventive health care services to children and their families, enabling them to lead healthy and productive lives. This award will support their nutrition services, assisting with the purchase an industrial refrigerator/freezer, stipends to employees to offer operating hours beyond the current two days per week, and supplemental foods when delivery is unavailable on their scheduled date.

**[Made Wright, Inc.](#)** - \$2,000 award

Made Wright, Inc. serves the Springfield and Central Illinois community in helping close economic disparities by providing financial and academic resources. These funds will support their Made Movement program and purchase backpacks and school supplies for their annual back-to-school giveaway in the fall.

**[Birth to Five Illinois](#)** - \$500 award

Birth to Five Illinois supports mobilization of communities to build and sustain equitable access to inclusive, high-quality early childhood services for all children and families. This award supplied books that will be distributed to children of all ages when attending community events as well as replenish the traveling library in the Springfield/Central Illinois area.

**About Meridian Health Plan of Illinois**

Meridian Health Plan of Illinois, Inc. and its family of health plans provide government-sponsored managed care services to families, children, seniors, and individuals with complex medical needs. This includes Meridian's Medicaid and Medicare-Medicaid plans, and YouthCare HealthChoice Illinois. YouthCare is a specialized program designed to address the healthcare needs of Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) youth in out-of-home placement and former foster youth. Meridian connects members to care and offers comprehensive services to support lifelong health and wellness. Meridian is a Centene company. Learn more at [ILmeridian.com](https://www.ilmeridian.com).

SOURCE Meridian of Illinois

For further information: Meridian Health Plan of Illinois, Inc., Myriea M. Amaya, Meridian Communications, [MediaInquiries.IL@mhplan.com](mailto:MediaInquiries.IL@mhplan.com)

---

<https://investors.centene.com/2024-07-31-Meridian-Health-Plan-of-Illinois-Awards-more-than-850,000-in-Health-Happens-Here-Grants-TM-in-the-First-Half-of-2024>