Expertise that empowers

2018 *Impact* Report

Research    Analyze    Connect    Transform

Smart Policy Works™
Dear friends of Smart Policy Works,

Just one year ago, we changed our name to Smart Policy Works and embarked on a new chapter in our mission to break down social, structural and economic barriers to health and well-being. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I’m happy to share that Smart Policy Works continues to advance the agency’s vision of a strong safety net and policies and practices that protect the health of all of us. We want to thank our partners in philanthropy for their support and trust in our vision for the future.

Dr. Teresa Garate
Board President

When we started, back in the era of welfare reform, Smart Policy Works connected people to a vital lifeline – Social Security Disability Income programs. Our work has certainly expanded and our expertise has grown, but we have stayed true to our mission. Today, SPW is one of a handful of stand-alone policy groups outside of the Washington D.C. focused on building health and well-being. We are proud to have the opportunity and privilege to use our expertise to innovate, to empower, and to serve others. Thank you to all of our partners who have been with us for 26 years making systems and policies work smarter and better. Join us in making this next year our strongest yet.

Barbara Otto
Chief Executive Officer

Join us in making public policy work smarter.

Meet our Board
Meet our team
Scroll through our history
In 2018 our team...

**Strengthened the social safety net for families**
We trained more than 25 community-based providers on public benefits programs, Medicaid, and Medicare.

**Promoted affordable, accessible, and high-quality healthcare for patients**
We consulted with more than 15 healthcare organizations in Illinois.

**Raised the bar for community healthcare for women veterans**
We united veteran-serving organizations from all over Illinois to improve women veterans’ access to health and behavioral health services.

**Improved access to employment for youth and adults with developmental disabilities**
We provided technical support to Medicaid and vocational rehabilitation agencies to improve the enrollment process and clarify public policy.

**Pioneered a new way for healthcare, housing, and justice systems to work together**
We built a collaboration involving more than 15 organizations to improve outcomes of justice-involved populations re-entering our communities.

**Ensured people with spinal cord injuries have a voice in research**
We created a “research readiness” curriculum to ensure people with disabilities are able to participate in the design, implementation, and interpretation of research.

**Helped women veterans access care in their communities**
In all we have trained more than 2000 professionals on military sexual trauma improving healthcare for more than 5000 women veterans.

**Piloted new ways to share information across the systems that serve our most vulnerable**
Together with the University of Chicago Urban Labs we launched a cross-sectoral data analysis to help Chicago and Cook County identify high utilizers of the health, housing, and justice systems.

**Advanced clinical treatment for veterans with PTSD related to Military Sexual Trauma**
We improved an online art-therapy treatment adjunct for PTSD so it can be used to serve military sexual trauma survivors with our partner at Warrior Stories.
Alfonzo Robinson was one of more than 15 people that participated in Smart Policy Works’ stakeholder training for people with traumatic spinal cord injuries. The training helps patients to play an active role in clinical research and to gain a stronger voice in their own care.

"I grew up on the west side of Chicago and became a gang member in my youth resulting in a number of stays at the Illinois Department of Corrections. During that time I met thousands of young gang members without guidance, family, or education. My spinal cord injury resulted from a fall down a flight of stairs a number of years ago, and this added another layer to my journey. Where some see injury, I see asset. The injury changed my life and my vision for the future."

“As an extension of those experiences and with my recent training, I am now a research-ready expert in spinal cord injury, juvenile and adult corrections, and rehabilitation, as well as urban poverty and social justice.”

Alfonzo Robinson was one of more than 15 people that participated in Smart Policy Works’ stakeholder training for people with traumatic spinal cord injuries. The training helps patients to play an active role in clinical research and to gain a stronger voice in their own care.

Meet the other participants

This project made possible by a grant from the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI).
Making healthcare veteran-friendly

In partnership with Access Community Health Network, we are making sure that women veterans have providers that recognize their experience and health needs. We worked with them:

• To educate staff on veterans’ health issues
• To incorporate screening questions into their electronic medical record about veteran status, life satisfaction, social support, and prescription pain medication use
• To plan marketing efforts to reach women veterans

This project made possible by generous support from the VNA Foundation.

Ensuring appropriate care for survivors of military sexual trauma

“Now I know.

Now I know to no longer have reservations about correcting or intervening. Now I know what I once justified as joking is clearly sexual harassment and hazing. Now I know victim blaming, and institutional betrayal have long-term consequences and harm both the victims and the military.”

Our training delivers results

• 85.5% increase in knowledge of sexual assault eligibility requirements for VA benefits
• 77% increase in recognizing military sexual trauma in patients

This work made possible by the generous support of the McCormick Foundation.

Read about this project
Check out our trainings
Read the story
Increasing mental health services for adolescents

As a result of our work, McHenry County invested in partial hospitalization services in Crystal Lake to care for adolescents across the county.

Improving ADA accessibility of healthcare providers in Illinois

We developed an ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) provider compliance tool for an Illinois health plan. Because the state Medicaid agency adopted it, the tool is in use for every health plan in Illinois. This statewide public policy improvement is a win for people with disabilities who now have improved access to providers.

This work made possible by the McHenry Mental Health Board.

This work made possible by an anonymous client.
Want to hear more about what’s in the works for 2019? Visit our website at smartpolicyworks.com and sign up to get email updates. Here is just a sample of what we’re working on:

**The Roadmap Initiative** is a cross-sector partnership involving more than 15 organizations across Chicago and Cook County investigating the cycle of homelessness, justice involvement, and emergency department use. Together with our partners, we will create a “Road Map” for systems change informed by data, systems analyses and the lived experience of high utilizers.

**Veterans Policy Tracking** tools will launch in 2019 to help inform friends, partners, funders, and the public about what government policies and programs will influence the lives and health of veterans.

*Veterans Policy Tracking is made possible by the McCormick Foundation.*

**Transforming healthcare to address social determinants of health**

Through policy analysis and working with community organizations we are changing the approach to social determinants of health especially for seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities. Who is using public programs? Who is missing out? Why? How can we change that? Whether it’s through the way we collect information, the way we provide care, or the way we communicate, we can improve health outcomes. Stay connected with us for more!
Thank you to our funders and partners

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