

BI ANNUAL NEWSLETTER



All about AWHONN

Our mission is to empower and support nurses caring for women, newborns, and their families through research, education, and advocacy.

What AWHONN does for your clinical practice and professional development:

Clinical Practice:

- Clinical Practice Guidelines
- Position Statements
- Access to Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic & Neonatal Nursing (JOGNN) and Nursing for Women's Health (NWH) Journals.

Professional Development:

- Emerging Leader Program, Research, and a wealth of volunteer
-

Section Chair Corner

Chris Emmons



The holiday season brings joy and connection for many families—but for nurses, it often marks one of the busiest and most emotionally demanding times of the year. Personal, professional, and holiday obligations can all converge at once. Recognizing and proactively managing stress during this season is essential for well-being and for providing safe, compassionate patient care.

It is essential to set time aside to take care of YOU.

Prioritize what you can control, and set realistic boundaries. AWHONN Illinois wishes you all a joyous holiday season, and we look forward to connecting with you in 2026. Read on for more information about the AWHONN Illinois 2026 Conference, April 16-17, 2026, in Galena, Illinois. Early bird registration opens January 1, 2026.

2026 Conference Speaker Sponsorship

Exciting News! The Perinatal Outreach Educator group has agreed to co-sponsor two presentations by Rebecca Cypher, MSN, PNNP.

Topics:

Born to Soon - Clinical Insights and Evolving Strategies in Preterm Birth

Challenge Your Knowledge: EFM Cases to Sharpen Critical Thinking

AWHONN Illinois Legislative Coordinator, Lori Folken, DNP, RNC-OB, C-EFM



AWHONN Illinois is excited to welcome Lori Folken as the new AWHONN Illinois Legislative Coordinator! Many of you may have already seen her recent updates and engagement on our Facebook page. Lori brings a wealth of experience in obstetric nursing and a deep commitment to advancing the mission of AWHONN.

Her involvement at the state and national levels has been extensive, including:

- AWHONN Illinois East Central Chapter Coordinator
- AWHONN Emerging Leader
- AWHONN Illinois Section Chair (two terms)
- AWHONN on the Hill participant
- AWHONN EFM Instructor
- Member, Illinois Maternal Mortality Review Committee (MMRC)
- Contributor to multiple ILPQC OB initiatives

In her role as Legislative Coordinator, Lori will:

- Maintain an active social media presence highlighting legislative issues that impact nurses, patients, and families.
- Contribute a dedicated legislative column to our bi-annual newsletter.
- Serve as the featured speaker for an upcoming AWHONN Illinois legislative webinar (date to be announced).

We are thrilled to have Lori's leadership, advocacy experience, and passion for maternal-newborn health guiding our legislative efforts. Please join us in welcoming her to this important role!

Legislative Lines

Learn How You Can Make an Impact - turn your passion into policy

Your voice matters – it's time to make it heard in Washington, D.C. Join us for AWHONN on Capitol Hill, our annual public policy conference and lobby day, where nurses like you meet face-to-face with lawmakers to advocate for policies that strengthen nursing, improve maternal health, and support families. Join us April 27-28, 2026, in Washington, DC, for your chance to make your voice heard. Together we can make a lasting impact.

[Learn more about the event, travel and hotel information, and more!](#)

As we reflect on 2025, we recognize significant challenges ahead resulting from the passage of the One Big Beautiful Bill (OBBB) Act. Medicaid coverage changes threaten access to care for the patients we serve and further jeopardize access to our fragile healthcare system, already impacted by OB unit and hospital closures. Our advocacy is more important than ever to support initiatives to improve the maternal health care system.

Unifying our voices is essential for affecting meaningful change. Whether at the federal or state level, collective effort can make a significant impact. Advocacy can take various forms, including phone calls, letters, and in-person visits to your legislators' offices. Advocacy resources and guidance are available on AWHONN.org, and additional materials can be found on the Illinois AWHONN Section Facebook page.

Where we see meaningful steps forward are here at home. Illinois has a track record for leading the nation in maternal and reproductive health care policy. It continues to do so with the latest call to action, "Coordination and Collective Action: Illinois' Blueprint for Birth Equity" (2025). I encourage you to take a moment and read the blueprint for Illinois' strategic priorities for maternal health and birth outcomes.

Looking ahead to 2026, the AWHONN Public Policy Committee is ensuring a comprehensive focus on advancing the public policy agenda at both the state and federal levels. While awaiting the finalized agenda, please review the webinar outlining the tentative 2026 priorities on the AWHONN website. The webinar discusses supporting comprehensive Medicaid coverage, as well as addressing substance use disorder and mental health care for the AWHONN patient population across the continuum.

Visit AWHONN.org for more on legislative and policy priorities, and please join me in attending AWHONN on Capitol Hill, April 27-28, 2026.



Newborn News

Neonatal Resuscitation Program (NRP)- the 9th edition is out. There are a handful of changes/updates worth your review if you utilize NRP in your practice. One change is that a laryngeal mask may now be used as a primary device for ventilation when face mask and intubation are unsuccessful. Please discuss how these changes may impact your practice with your local NRP instructor.

Maternal Matters



In 2026, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) plans to share an update on the Obstetric Hemorrhage Education Project. Previous releases were in 2008 and 2016. Your Administrative Perinatal Center (APC) will provide those updates once released.

The Illinois Perinatal Quality Collaborative (ILPQC) has an initiative on Maternal Mental Health. The initiative has many components, including linkage to resources. Below are a few to add to your own list.

- National Maternal Mental Health Hotline 1-833-TLC-MAMA (1-833-852-6262)
- Postpartum Support International 1-800-944-4773
- Connect PSI (phone app)
- Perinatal Mental Health Tool Kit (ACOG) [acog.org/programs/perinatal-mental-health](https://www.acog.org/programs/perinatal-mental-health)
- Perinatal Mental Health Conditions (AIM Safety Bundle) [saferbirth.org/PSBS/Perinatal-mental-health-conditions](https://www.saferbirth.org/PSBS/Perinatal-mental-health-conditions)
- Lifeline for Moms umassmed.edu/lifeline4moms/access-programs
- findhelp.org- enter your zip code, and the services you're looking for will be listed
- Illinois Doc Assist (866)986-2778 illinoisdocassist.uic.edu

AWHONN Illinois Hospital Liaisons

Chicago Suburbs-
Erinn Gebert

Chicago Suburbs-
Amanda Maine

Chicago-
Amanda Bakken

South
Central/Springfield-
Kathy Patrick

Northwest
Region/Dixon-
LeeAnn Price

Chicago -
Elizabeth Krol

Northwest
Region/Sterling-
Sarah Deter & Vanessa
Simonton

North
Central/Galesburg -
Carolyn Tomeo

Northwest Region/
Rockford -
Allie Cesarone

South
Central/Mattoon-
Dena Cochran

AWHONN Illinois is seeking volunteers to serve as liaisons at Illinois hospitals with obstetric services. Our vision for the hospital liaison is to promote AWHONN as a trusted resource for education and evidence-based clinical practice.

- The hospital liaison will disseminate information on education programs at the local, state, and national levels within their hospital.
- The hospital liaison will promote Section and Chapter activities to women's health and perinatal colleagues.
- The hospital liaison will also communicate the professional and educational needs of the women's health, obstetric, and neonatal nurses within their hospital to the AWHONN Illinois Section leadership team.

The organization can offer support for liaisons interested in coordinating educational webinars or in-seat events. (Optional)

Requirements for designation as a Hospital Liaison include active AWHONN membership and employment at the hospital where they serve. If you are interested in this role, please get in touch with me using the information provided below.

Christine Emmons, MSN, RNC-NIC, CNL, C-ONQS
AWHONN Illinois Section Chair
Cmemmons1806@gmail.com



Student Sector

AWHONN Illinois section will accept applications for student nurse interns. The intern must be a nursing student currently enrolled in any nursing program in Illinois, entering the final year of their program. Student interns should demonstrate a commitment to AWHONN's mission and vision and a passion for women's health, obstetric, and neonatal nursing. Each student intern's term will run from May to May. We are looking for interns to start in May of 2026! Visit Illinois.AWHONN.org for developing information on the exciting opportunity.

Supporting AWHONN IL

Perinatal Outreach Educators of Illinois (POEI) will be providing support to AWHONN IL for the 2026 conference. They are a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization which has a rich history, spanning approximately 35 years, dedicated exclusively to equip RN educators with valuable resources for networking and collaboration with fellow educators. Together, we aim to enhance perinatal education throughout Illinois, elevating the standard of care in our field.

In 2024, we expanded our membership by welcoming all Perinatal RN Educators into this vibrant network. POEI operates on the principles of volunteerism and a shared mission. The purpose of the organization is to collaboratively and collectively address educational issues which impact perinatal outcomes in Illinois. This group meets multiple times a year to network, provide educational programs, share information and discuss state initiatives and programs.

The current officers for POEI are:

Myra Sabini, BSN, RNC-OB, C-EFM
President 2024-2027

Kara Calhoun, MPH, MSN, RNC-OB, C-EFM
Vice President 2024-2027

Keri Benbrook, BSN, RNC-NIC, CBC, CPN
Secretary 2024-2027

Donna Lemmenes, MSN, CPNP, RNC-NIC
Treasurer 2024-2027

Kim Vuckovich, MSN, CNL, RNC-NIC
Treasurer 2024-2027

visit <https://www.perinataloutreachil.org/> to see all that they have to offer.

Special Announcement

AWHONN Illinois Section Conference
April 16-17, 2026 in Galena, Illinois

The Perinatal Outreach Educators of Illinois (POEI) have financially sponsored (in part) the following presentations by:



Rebecca Cypher, MSN, PNNP

Born Too Soon: Clinical Insights and Evolving Strategies in Preterm Birth

Challenge Your Knowledge: EFM Cases to Sharpen Critical Thinking

Introducing:



Two OB Nurses talking with their nursing colleagues and other "famous people" about health-related topics and events both near and far.

Download the Podcast from the Apple App Store:

Visit the OB Nurse Smart Talk Webpage



ILLINOIS GIVES BACK!

Your Support Empowers Nurses and Recognizes Their Dedication

Donate to Every Woman, Every Baby Today

Every Contribution Matters: Even the smallest donation can make a big difference.

Be a Champion for Women & Babies, to ensure they have access to the best care possible.



Thank You for Your Generosity.
Together, we can make a difference!



**AWHONN IL Chapter
Map**
 For information on
 Chapters, please
 contact Section
 Chair
 Chris Emmons
Cmemmons1806@gmail.com

Save The Date

2026



Join us at IL AWHONN conference for unparalleled learning and networking.



The Galena Territory
Eagle Ridge Inn & Resort



April 16 & 17, 2026
Thursday - 0700 Registration
Friday - 1230 Conclusion

*Eagle Ridge Resort
Galena, IL*



Early Bird Registration Opens January 1st, 2026