

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



As our time serving as the AWHONN Illinois Section Chair and Secretary/Treasurer comes to a close, we want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to each of our members for your unwavering support, engagement, and commitment over the past six years. It has been an incredible privilege to serve alongside such passionate nurses and leaders who are dedicated to advancing the health of women, newborns, and their families across Illinois. Together, we have celebrated successes, navigated challenges, expanded educational opportunities, and strengthened our professional community. None of these accomplishments would have been possible without your enthusiasm, collaboration, and dedication to our shared mission.

As we prepare to pass the torch in January 2027, we are excited to welcome our newly elected leaders, Tina Stupek as Section Chair and Gen Stoner as Secretary/Treasurer. Congratulations to both of you on your election! We are confident that your vision, leadership, and commitment to AWHONN will continue to move the Illinois Section forward. Thank you again to our members for allowing us the honor of serving you. We look forward to supporting Tina, Gen, and our outstanding leadership team as they begin this exciting new chapter, and we know the future of the Illinois Section is in excellent hands.

Chris Emmons, AWHONN Illinois Section Chair
Roma Allen, AWHONN Illinois Secretary/Treasurer

AWHONN National Committees

Are you interested in getting involved at the national level? In August AWHONN opens up the application process for the various national committees. Learn more about the committees at <https://www.awhonn.org/get-involved/national-committees/>

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



AWHONN on Capitol Hill was held at the end of April and it was another stellar year, with new record attendance of 151! It was wonderful to have Mary Dawn Koenig, and LaTonya Jones both from Chicago in attendance. We had a great time and hope to have more Illinois members join us next year!

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Day one prepared attendees for the Hill visits; presenters shared information about the legislative process, prepare for meetings, and most importantly how to present information about the bills we would discuss with the legislative offices. The end of the day concluded with a group picture in front of the Capitol. Day two were Capitol Hill visits; we visited the offices of Sen. Duckworth, Sen. Durbin and Rep. Miller. We advocated for two bills and share our concern about nursing being excluded from the programs defined as a professional degree and encouraged their offices to support any legislation that may present to change this rule.

We advocated for the following bills:

- H.R. 3942/S. 2059 The Keeping Obstetrics Local Act
- H.R. 3593/S. 1974 Title VIII Nursing Workforce Reauthorization Act of 2025



Nursing is a Professional Degree Act and Legal Update

Seth Chase, Director, Governmental Affairs, recently sent out a Call to Action for a bill introduced in both the House and Senate. The Nursing is a Professional Degree Act would enact a statutory change to make students enrolled in graduate nursing program eligible for federal professional degree loans per S. Chase. The bills are H.R. 8691, introduced by Rep. Jen Kiggans (R-VA-02), and S. 4568 introduced by Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-OR). The ask of membership is to call your Representative and Senators and ask they cosponsor this bill. Please [visit the link](#) to find more information.



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Nursing as a Professional Degree Exclusion Lawsuit – AWHONN joined other organizations in filing a lawsuit challenging the Department of Education's exclusion of nursing as a professional degree. Last week, a federal judge blocked part of the rule that held nursing to lower caps. In response, the U.S. Education Department issued a revised rule to follow the judge's order but expect additional filings from the Ed. Department.

AWHONN State Policy Map

AWHONN has introduced a new tool to assist members with their state legislative priorities. Using the [link](#), you can select Illinois on the map and the bills in various process levels in Illinois are clickable. Please take a moment to explore this new tool. This is just the beginning it will expand in coming months and I would love your feedback to share with the AWHONN team.

Interested in [legislative advocacy](#)?

Check out the Introduction to Civics for Nurse Advocates Webinar, which offers 0.75 Nursing contact hours.



Newborn News

- As of June 1st, 2026 eligible employees with job-protected, unpaid leave when their newborn is admitted to a NICU. This is Public Act 104-0259 Family Neonatal Intensive Care Leave Act. Illinois .gov
- A revised AAP clinical report offers evidence-based guidance on therapeutic hypothermia for neonatal HIE and addresses some of the gaps in knowledge. The free report “Therapeutic Hypothermia for Neonatal Hypoxic-Ischemic Encephalopathy: Clinical report” is available at <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2025-073627> and was published in the early 2026 issue of Pediatrics. The report reinforces current practices and clarifies potential eligibility of younger neonates and timing of beginning treatment.

Maternal Matters



In 2026, 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
- 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

Other numbers to keep

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 988 or 1-800-273-8255
- Perinatal HIV Hotline & Syphilis Warmline 1-800-439-4079
- Domestic Violence Hotline US 1-800-799-7233 or IL 1-877-TO END DV
- Human Trafficking Hotline 1-888-373-7888

ILLINOIS

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

Northwest Region/
Rockford -
Allie Cesarone &
Monica Dorsey

North
Central/Galesburg -
Carolyn Tomeo

South
Central/Springfeild-
Kathy Patrick

East Central/Mattoon-
Dena Cochran

Southern
Region/Carbondale-
Jennifer Williams

News from our Hospital Liaisons -Jen Williams/ Southern Region/Carbondale

Memorial Hospital of Carbondale Earns Recognition for Excellence in Maternity Care

Memorial Hospital of Carbondale continues to demonstrate its commitment to providing exceptional care for mothers and babies, earning two significant recognitions for its maternity services. In 2026, the hospital was recognized by U.S. News & World Report as a Best Hospital for Maternity Care, highlighting its dedication to safe, high-quality, and patient-centered childbirth care. This is the third year in a row they have been recognized for this achievement.

In addition, Memorial Hospital of Carbondale received the Illinois Birthing Quality Excellence Award, an honor that recognizes Illinois hospitals for their dedication to sustainability, reducing primary cesareans, addressing disparities, and promoting respectful and patient centered care has made measurable difference for the birthing persons and families in southern Illinois.

These achievements reflect the collaborative efforts of the hospital's physicians, nurses, lactation consultants, advanced practice providers, and support staff who work tirelessly to ensure families receive compassionate, high-quality care throughout the pregnancy, birth, and postpartum experience.

"Receiving these recognitions is a testament to the dedication of our Women and Children's Services team and our ongoing commitment to excellence," said Terri Pursell, Director of Women and Children's Department at Memorial Hospital of Carbondale. "We are proud to provide families in Southern Illinois with safe, innovative, and family-centered maternity care."

Memorial Hospital of Carbondale remains focused on advancing maternal and newborn health through continuous quality improvement, patient education, breastfeeding support, and multidisciplinary collaboration. These awards underscore the hospital's mission to deliver outstanding care while supporting the health and well-being of mothers, babies, and families across the region.

ILLINOIS

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. If your interest and would like more information please contact.

Christine Emmons, MSN, RNC-NIC, CNL, C-ONQS, NPD-BC

AWHONN Illinois Section Chair

Cmemmons1806@gmail.com

AWHONN 2027 Voting Results

This year Illinois was up for new Sections Chair and Section Secretary/Treasurer. We are happy to announce we also had an Illinois candidate elected to AWHONN board of Directors .

Director results- Mary Dawn Koenig, PhD, RN, CNM,
FACNM, FAWHONN, FAAN
Three-year term (2027-2029)



Section Chair
Christina (Tina) Stupek , MSN, RNC-OB,
C-EFM, C-ONQS, C-OBE
Three-year term (2027-2029)



Section Secretary/Treasurer
Genevieve Stoner BSN, RN
Three-year term (2027-2029)





Student Sector

Coming Soon! AWHONN Illinois is excited to announce the upcoming relaunch of our Student Nurse Internship Program. We are currently updating the program structure, application process, and selection criteria to create a meaningful experience for nursing students interested in women's health, obstetric, and neonatal nursing. If you know a nursing student who may be interested, we encourage them to watch for application details coming soon. We also welcome ideas and feedback from our Illinois nursing community as we develop this exciting opportunity. Today's students are tomorrow's women's health leaders.

**Join the AWHONN IL Chicago Suburb
Chapter for an in-person event on
Wednesday, September 23, 2026 from
5:30-8:00 CST**

**Ten Pillars to Safe, Smart & Defensible
Perinatal Practice**

Presented by:

Maureen Elia MSN, RN, C-EFM, RNC-OB, RNC-IAP

Where :

Lutheran General Hospital

1775 Dempster St, Park Ridge IL 60068

Room: 10 West Special Functions

Registration opens Aug 13th 2026 at

<https://illinois.awhonn.org/events/>





SAVE THE DATE!



AMNIOTIC
FLUID
EMBOLISM
FOUNDATION

JOIN US FOR THE
AWHONN
Webinar

Jointly provided by the
**Northern Illinois and
South Central Illinois**
AWHONN Chapters



**WEDNESDAY,
SEPTEMBER 16, 2026**



**TIME:
5:00 – 6:30 PM**
CENTRAL TIME ZONE



**PRESENTED BY:
Shelley Hough**
Administrative Coordinator,
AFE Foundation



**HYBRID OPTION
AVAILABLE IN
NORTHERN IL ONLY**

**OSF St. Anthony
Medical Center**
Foundation Room
5666 E. State Street
Rockford, IL 61107



**REGISTRATION FLYER
COMING SOON!**

Stay tuned!

Learn more about Amniotic Fluid
Embolism, resources for families,
and how we can work together
to raise awareness and
save lives.

Visit:
<https://afesupport.org>



Together, we can make a difference.
AWARENESS. SUPPORT. HOPE.



AHWONN IL Annual Conference

Nurses from across the state gathered April 16–17, 2026, at Eagle Ridge Resort and Spa in Galena, Illinois, for the Illinois AWHONN Annual Conference—an energizing event focused on learning, networking, and professional renewal. Keynote speaker Rebecca Cypher, MSN, PNNP, opened the conference with insightful presentations on evolving strategies in preterm birth and interactive case-based learning to strengthen critical thinking in electronic fetal monitoring. Additional sessions highlighted both clinical excellence and patient-centered perspectives. Topics included therapeutic hypothermia and its legal implications, trauma-informed care for NICU families, and the recognition and management of sepsis in obstetric care. The program also emphasized the importance of patient and family experiences, with powerful presentations on survivorship and celebrating diverse birth journeys, including families welcoming children with Down syndrome. The event was supported by Perinatal Outreach Educators of Illinois, reinforcing AWHONN’s commitment to advancing the health of women and newborns through evidence-based education and collaborative practice.

Save the date for 2027 conference coming soon.



ILLINOIS

OB NURSE SMART TALK

*with Mary Ann
& Missy*



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



AWHONN FOUNDATION



ILLINOIS GIVES BACK!

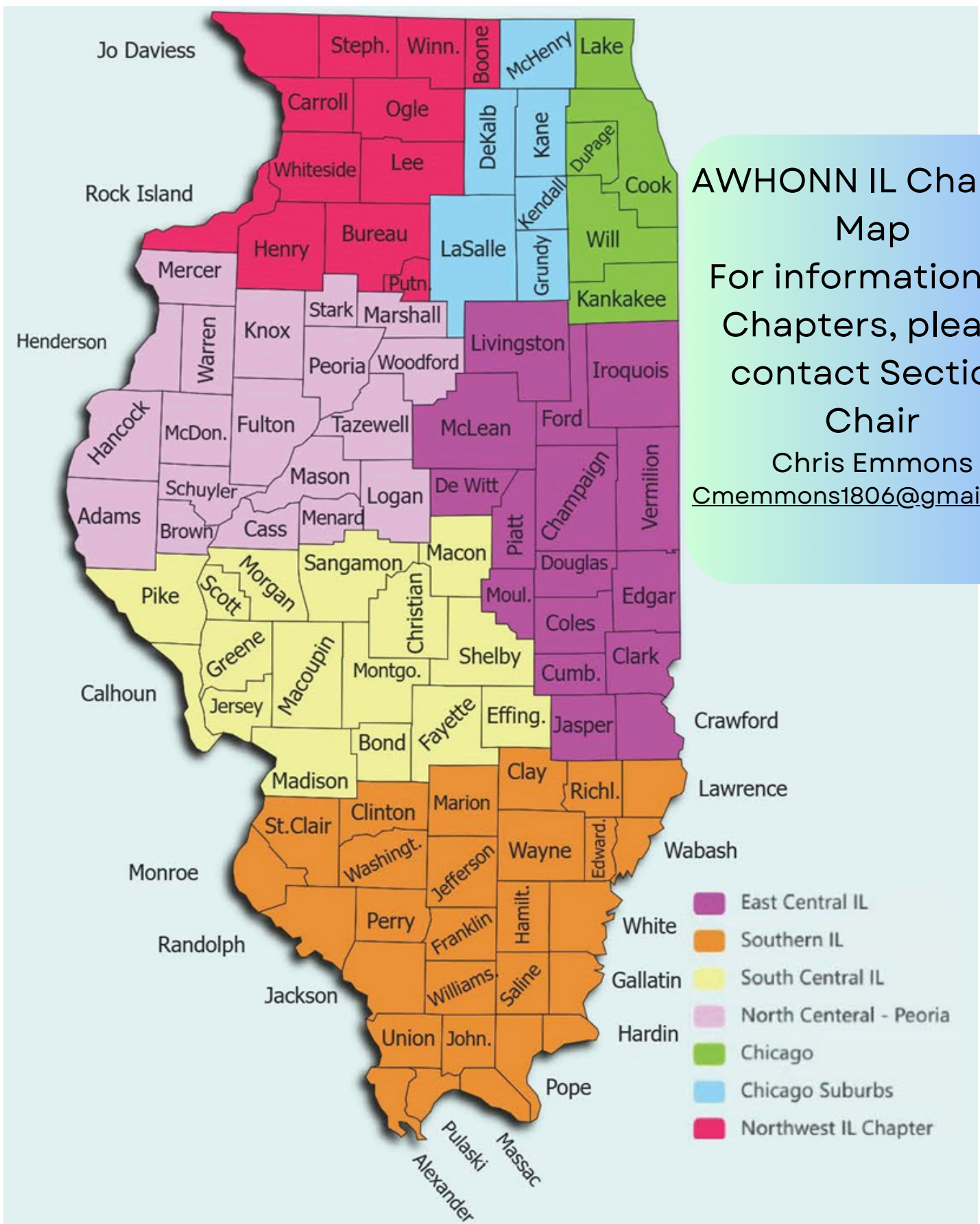
*Your Support Empowers Nurses and
Recognizes Their Dedication*

Every Contribution Matter:

Even the smallest donation
can make a big difference



Scan the QR code
or go to
awhonn.org/awhonn-foundation



AWHONN IL Chapter Map

For information on
Chapters, please
contact Section
Chair

Chris Emmons

Cmemmons1806@gmail.com

- East Central IL
- Southern IL
- South Central IL
- North Central - Peoria
- Chicago
- Chicago Suburbs
- Northwest IL Chapter