



CONNECTIONS IN PREVENTION 

October 29 – 30, 2026 | Springfield, IL

Attendance Justification Toolkit

Getting to a conference takes more than enthusiasm; sometimes it takes a paper trail. This toolkit has everything you may need to make the ask:

- ✓ A snapshot of the agenda, keynote speakers, and programming
- ✓ Talking points that demonstrate the conference's ROI
- ✓ A detailed budget worksheet to estimate your attendance costs
- ✓ A customizable letter template to send to your supervisor

Just fill in a few details, send it off, and start planning for CIP2026!



OCTOBER 29 – 30, 2026

President Abraham Lincoln DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel
Springfield, IL

Conference Overview

About the Event

The [Connections in Prevention](#) conference is Prevention First's annual flagship gathering for professionals across the continuum of care. CIP 2026 brings together practitioners, educators, advocates, and community leaders to share knowledge and build capacity to prevent substance misuse and promote mental health and wellness.

Registration Information

Conference Registration = \$400 / person

With your CIP 2026 conference registration, you will receive:

- One and a half days of conference programming, including keynote speakers, workshops, and networking opportunities.
- Lunch on October 29 and Breakfast on October 30.
- CEU credits for any conference sessions attended in person*
- Discounted room rate (\$129/night) for conference attendees.
- Admission to the Exhibit Hall (Over 20 local and national exhibitors!).

*CEUs have been applied for CADAC, CRADC, CSADC, CAADC, CPS, CPSP, PCGC, CCJP, CAAP, CRSS, CPRS, CFPP, CVSS, CODP I/II, MAATP, and RDDP

Keynote Speakers

CIP 2026 features three keynote sessions across the two-day conference, with presentations from four nationally recognized voices in prevention, recovery, and behavioral health:

2026 Keynote Speakers	
Mark Sanders	A nationally recognized speaker, trainer, and author in the addiction and recovery field, known for culturally responsive approaches to substance use treatment and prevention. Mark is the recipient of four lifetime achievement awards, including the prestigious NAADAC Enlightenment Award.
Kateri Coyhis	Founder of White Bison, Inc., and a leading voice on Wellbriety—the movement for Indigenous healing and recovery rooted in cultural and spiritual tradition. Kateri has been providing training, delivering presentations, and offering technical assistance for over 19 years.
Stephen Hill	Founder of Speak Sobriety, bestselling author, recovery coach, and defense attorney—Stephen is a young person in long-term recovery whose story moves from stigma to purpose. A former student-athlete who struggled with substance use disorder for a decade, he today lives a meaningful, healthy, sober life and speaks nationally on prevention and mental health to help others find their own path forward.



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Dr. Lisa Martin

Associate Vice President of the Sanctuary Institute and licensed clinical psychologist specializing in trauma-responsive, equity-centered systems of care. Dr. Martin guides organizations in building cultures of safety, accountability, and healing—translating equity principles into sustainable, systemic practice.

Conference Agenda at a Glance

Thursday, October 29	Friday, October 30
8:00 am – Exhibit Hall Opens	8:00 am – Exhibit Hall Opens
8:30 am – Breakfast, Opening & Welcome	8:00 am – Breakfast
9:30 am – Opening Keynote Session	8:30 am – Workshop Session 4
10:45 am – Workshop Session 1	9:45 am – Workshop Session 5
12:00 pm – Lunch	11:00 am – Closing Keynote Session
12:45 pm – Afternoon Keynote Session	12:00 pm – Exhibit Hall Closes
2:00 pm – Workshop Session 2	
3:15 pm – Workshop Session 3	
4:30 pm – 5:30 pm Roundtable Discussions	



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Talking Points: The Value of Attending

Use these points when speaking with your supervisor or preparing a written request:

Professional Development

- CIP 2026 features four nationally recognized keynote speakers: Mark Sanders and Kateri Coyhis, whose work spans addiction recovery and Indigenous healing; Stephen Hill, founder of Speak Sobriety and a young person in long-term recovery whose story of transformation is both powerful and immediately applicable to prevention work; and Dr. Lisa Martin of the Sanctuary Institute, a licensed clinical psychologist and expert in trauma-responsive, equity-centered systems of care.
- Five workshop sessions across two days—plus roundtable discussions—provide immersive, applied learning on topics directly tied to our day-to-day work.
- Sessions span core prevention, treatment, and recovery areas including substance use, mental health, youth development, impaired driving, alcohol and cannabis policy, harm reduction, and more.

Organizational Impact

- Professionals who attend specialized conferences report higher confidence in applying evidence-based strategies and stronger professional networks.
- Attending in person allows for relationship-building that virtual formats cannot replicate—which is especially valuable for coalition work and community partnerships.
- Staff retention and morale are supported when employees have access to meaningful professional development.

Cost Efficiency

- Conference registration provides access to two full days of programming—including multiple keynotes, workshops, roundtables, and exhibit hall access—at a fraction of the cost of separate trainings.
- One meal is included for each day of the conference (lunch on October 29 and breakfast on October 30), reducing out-of-pocket meal costs.
- For Illinois-based staff, the in-state location minimizes travel expenses compared to national conferences.

Post-Conference Deliverables

To maximize our organization's return on investment, I commit to:

- Preparing a written summary of key takeaways and resources to share with the team
- Presenting on at least one actionable strategy from the conference within [30/60] days of returning
- Identifying at least one new partner, resource, or tool to strengthen our work



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Budget Worksheet

Use this worksheet to help calculate the estimated cost of attending CIP 2026. Fill in actual figures when available; use estimates for others. Remember to check with your organization's travel, per diem, and reimbursement policies.

Expense Item	Est. Cost	Notes
REGISTRATION		
Conference registration fee	\$400	See prevention.org/2026_cip_conference
TRAVEL		
Mileage / personal vehicle	\$_____	
Gas	\$_____	
Airfare (if applicable)	\$_____	
Parking	\$_____	
Ground transportation (rideshare, bus, etc.)	\$_____	
LODGING		
Hotel: _____ nights x \$129/night	\$_____	Special Rate for Conference Attendees
MEALS (Not covered by conference)		
Day 1 – Oct. 29 (breakfast and dinner)	\$_____	Lunch provided
Day 2 – Oct. 30 (lunch and dinner, if staying)	\$_____	Breakfast provided
ESTIMATED GRAND TOTAL	\$_____	



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Sample Letter: Request to Attend

[Date]

Dear [Supervisor's Name],

I am writing to request approval to attend the 2026 Connections in Prevention (CIP) Conference, hosted by Prevention First, on October 29–30, 2026. This two-day event is one of Illinois' premier professional development opportunities for prevention and behavioral health practitioners, and I believe attending will bring significant value to our work here at [Organization Name].

The conference brings together experts and advocates from across the state and nation to explore innovative practices and strategies that promote behavioral health, resilience, and equity. This year's programming is designed to better situate prevention work within diverse perspectives and foster inclusive, community-driven solutions—directly relevant to the work our team does every day.

What I Will Gain

Attending CIP 2026 will provide me with:

- Engaging keynote presentations from nationally recognized speakers, including **Mark Sanders, Kateri Coyhis, Stephen Hill, and Dr. Lisa Martin**—whose expertise spans recovery, cultural healing, trauma-responsive care, and substance use prevention
- Up to five targeted workshop sessions and a closing keynote across two full days of programming
- Inspiring roundtable discussions with peers on pressing topics in substance use prevention, mental health, youth development, and more
- Opportunities to network with professionals who are advancing similar goals in their communities
- An exhibit hall full of tools, resources, and program models to explore

How This Benefits Our Organization

The skills and knowledge I gain at CIP 2026 will translate directly into improved outcomes for [Organization Name]. Specifically, I plan to:

- Bring back evidence-based strategies and resources to share with our team through a post-conference debrief and/or training session
- Apply new approaches to [specific program or initiative relevant to your role]
- Identify potential collaborators and partnerships that align with our strategic priorities
- Stay current on the evolving landscape of prevention policy, funding, and best practices



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Estimated Cost Summary

I have prepared a detailed budget estimate for your review (see the Budget Worksheet on the following pages). The estimated total cost to attend is:

Expense	Estimated Cost
Conference Registration	\$400
Lodging (if applicable) <i>Special Rate of \$129/night</i>	\$_____
Transportation / Mileage	\$_____
Out of Conference Meals	\$_____
Other	\$_____
ESTIMATED TOTAL	\$_____

I am committed to making the most of this professional development opportunity and sharing what I learn with our team. I am happy to discuss this request at your convenience.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Title]

[Phone / Email]