



***Community Health Workers & Pharmacists:  
Their Frontline Role in the Response to COVID-19***

**SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES**

(In order of appearance on the program)

***Cait Ellis, MPA*** is a Program Manager for the National Institute for Health Care Management (NIHCM) Foundation in Washington, D.C. In this role, Ms. Ellis conducts research and analysis to inform and improve management strategies for health care leaders in the public and private sector. She also provides support for NIHCM's broad programming portfolio, including webinars, events, grants and awards. Ms. Ellis works across a wide range of topics, including the opioid crisis and mental health, rural health, and maternal and child health. Prior to joining NIHCM, Ms. Ellis held several political and nonprofit internships and fellowships. Originally from California, Ms. Ellis received her Master's in Public Affairs with a concentration in Policy Analysis from the School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University, Bloomington, and she holds a BA in Politics from Willamette University.

***Denise Octavia Smith, MBA, CHW, PN*** is the founding Executive Director of the National Association of Community Health Workers. As a woman of African descent, a Community Health Worker, certified patient navigator and survivor of a rare chronic disease, Denise centers the expertise of communities that experience vulnerability and amplifies the roles of CHWs to strengthen public health capacity. In partnership with hundreds of CHWs, Denise led the historic intervention across CT to engage, educate and enroll 30,000 residents into the ACA Health Insurance Marketplace in 2013 and implemented the CT Equal Coverage Coalition from 2015-2019 to measure and improve health insurance literacy, health system navigation and simplify health insurance legislation.

Mrs. Smith is a Visiting Scholar at the Harvard Medical School Center for Primary Care, an Aspen Institute Healthy Communities Fellow, and a Robert Wood Johnson Culture of Health Leader. Denise collaborates on national initiatives to advance CHW leadership and roles in COVID-19 response and community recovery, pursue equity, and improve clinical and community integration to address the social determinants of health. She envisions a culture of health where individuals have self-determination and dignity,

where communities meaningfully contribute to system design and governance and where societies eliminate structural barriers to well-being.

**Christine Reiten** is Vice President of Medicaid at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota

As vice president of Medicaid, Christine Reiten provides leadership and responsibility for the overall performance and member experience of plans covering Minnesota's Medical Assistance program (state Medicaid).

Reiten joined Blue Cross in 2020, bringing more than 25 years of experience in working with government program products and lines of business. Most recently, Reiten served as senior director of state public programs for Medica in Minnetonka, Minnesota. In that role, she was responsible for all areas of product strategy and performance; growth initiatives; planning; and execution. Reiten's tenure at Medica also included leading regulatory adherence and product administration. Additionally, Reiten has held compliance leadership positions in government programs with Prime Therapeutics and Metropolitan Health Plan – Hennepin Health. Reiten began her career at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, serving 17 years in government programs administration and operations leadership.

Reiten holds a B.A. in business from St. Mary's University in Minneapolis.

**Dr. Amy Fendrich** is Senior Medical Director of Government Products and Medical Policy at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota

Dr. Fendrich is board certified in Internal Medicine and maintains medical licenses in both Florida and Minnesota. She has been employed at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota since 2019 and provides medical direction to Medicare, Medicaid, and Medical Policy teams.

Dr. Fendrich's clinical background was focused on providing primary care services to Medicaid and uninsured patients. She has worked as a Medical Director for large insurers of both Medicare and Medicaid members since 2014. Her focus is on the provision of medically appropriate services to all members with a focus on racial and health equity.

Dr. Fendrich received her medical degree from the University of Miami and completed a residency in Internal Medicine. She is board certified in Internal Medicine and is an elected Fellow of the American College of Physicians. Dr. Fendrich received her Bachelor of Science with Honors and Distinction from Cornell University in New York. She volunteers every Saturday morning at a local organization serving meals to the homeless.

**Rick Gates** is senior vice president of pharmacy and healthcare at Walgreens, based in Deerfield Ill. He is responsible for commercial development and sales, contracting, pharma development, pharmacy supply chain, and clinical programs and alliances. Before then he was group vice president of pharmacy where he led the strategic development, alignment and delivery of pharmacy-led health and wellness programs. He has served in roles of increasing responsibility since joining Walgreens in 1995 after graduation from pharmacy school including leading Walgreens Western Pharmacy Operations and responsible for integrating Duane Reade stores into the Walgreens network.

Rick serves as a board member with the National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS) Foundation, AllianceRx and Pharmacy Quality Alliance (PQA). Rick received a B.S. in pharmacy from the University of Iowa in Iowa City. He is an active member of the American Pharmacist Association, NCPDP, NASP and the University of Iowa Alumni Association.