



Health Care Happenings

January 2021

Improving access and health outcomes for the uninsured and underinsured across the St. Louis region



Saint Louis
Regional Health Commission
Newsletter

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MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

As people celebrated the 2021 New Year, a new hashtag was plastered all over my social media: #twentytwentywon. After the unprecedented year of 2020, which gave rise to so much loss, we are all looking forward to a new year with more wins. Then, the events of January 6, 2021, reminded us that there is still a lot to be won. As we continue to look forward to a better new year, I want to take a moment to reflect on what we were able to accomplish at the Commission during 2020, before jumping into our goals for 2021.

For the Commission, the year started with the naming of a new CEO and the release of our new website and newsletter. We quickly found ourselves pivoting to respond to the community needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this very challenging time, we were able to leverage our initial investment of \$300,000 in a pandemic emergency response fund to raise over \$2 million to support continued access to care for uninsured patients and Gateway to Better Health members. Thanks to generosity of our partners, we were able to fund COVID-19 testing in North St. Louis, outreach and education to communities that were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, telehealth support for healthcare services, and other basic needs for our underserved communities. In addition, we were able to formalize our new patient advisory board, and receive approval for a new physical function benefit for the Gateway to Better Health program.

In an unprecedented year, it is only fair that we do unprecedented things. In 2020, this community came together to secure Medicaid Expansion for our region. This change will not only bring health care to thousands of residents who deserve access to health services, but it will also keep hospitals open, create jobs, promote economic growth, and bring us one step closer to health equity.

As I mentioned previously, the implementation of Medicaid Expansion marks the end of our Gateway to Better Health program. We could not be happier to know that now our communities will have access to better, long-term, sustainable health care options.

As we look forward to this year, 2021, we are excited to work with our partners and each of you to re-envision and reshape the RHC to meet the needs of our community. While working to seamlessly transition our Gateway members to Medicaid expansion, we also will be developing a new strategic plan for the Commission and working to rebrand ourselves for the work to come. Thank you for your continued support of the RHC, and please join in the discussion of how we can become an even better organization!

Angela Brown

REGISTER TODAY FOR OUR VIRTUAL TOWN HALL

Join us and our partners for a virtual town hall with bipartisan Missouri legislators! [Register today at bit.ly/rhctownhall.](https://bit.ly/rhctownhall)

The event will take place on Friday, January 29, 2021, from 10:30am – 12pm. Join our interactive zoom webinar or stream the event live at www.youtube.com/user/STLRHC. Zoom meeting information will be emailed to you after you complete registration.

Moderated by Dr. Heidi B. Miller, the panel will feature Rep. Mary Elizabeth Coleman, Rep. Sarah Unsicker, and Senator Brian Williams. Elected officials will discuss ways to address COVID's impact on the behavioral health of our community. As a participant, you are encouraged to bring your own questions for the panelists on this topic!

This event is sponsored by the RHC, Alive and Well Communities, Behavioral Health Network of Greater St. Louis, Generate Health, PrepareSTL, Regional Response Team, and the Saint Louis Integrated Health Network.



STAY INFORMED ON RHC ADVOCACY

1. Sign up for our RHC Advocacy Alert

We are launching a new RHC Advocacy Alert! Stay up to date on policy priorities and advocacy opportunities through our emails. You can subscribe to the listserv on our [policy page](#).

2. Visit our RHC policy tracker

On our [policy tracker](#), we follow state legislation that could significantly affect the St. Louis health care system. We will provide plain language descriptions, updates as the legislation moves through session, our stance as an organization on the bills, and ways you can influence the legislation.

3. Prepare to safely vote at upcoming elections

COVID-19 has created additional challenges to vote. We are here, along with our partners, to help you make a plan to vote safely in the spring elections. [Our website's vote safe page](#) hosts important shareable information about upcoming elections, including ways to vote safely. Share the information with your community to help get out the vote!

4. Register for the 2021 St. Louis Mayoral Primary Candidate Forum

The RHC is a proud partner of the upcoming 2021 St. Louis Mayoral Primary Candidate Forum, hosted by the Social Policy & Electoral Accountability Collaborative (SPEAC). The mayoral forum will feature questions crafted from the Ferguson Commission's Calls to Action aimed at giving St. Louisans' a sense of how this year's mayoral candidates plan to make St. Louis a more racially equitable city. The virtual event is February 10 at 6:30pm. [Register here](#).

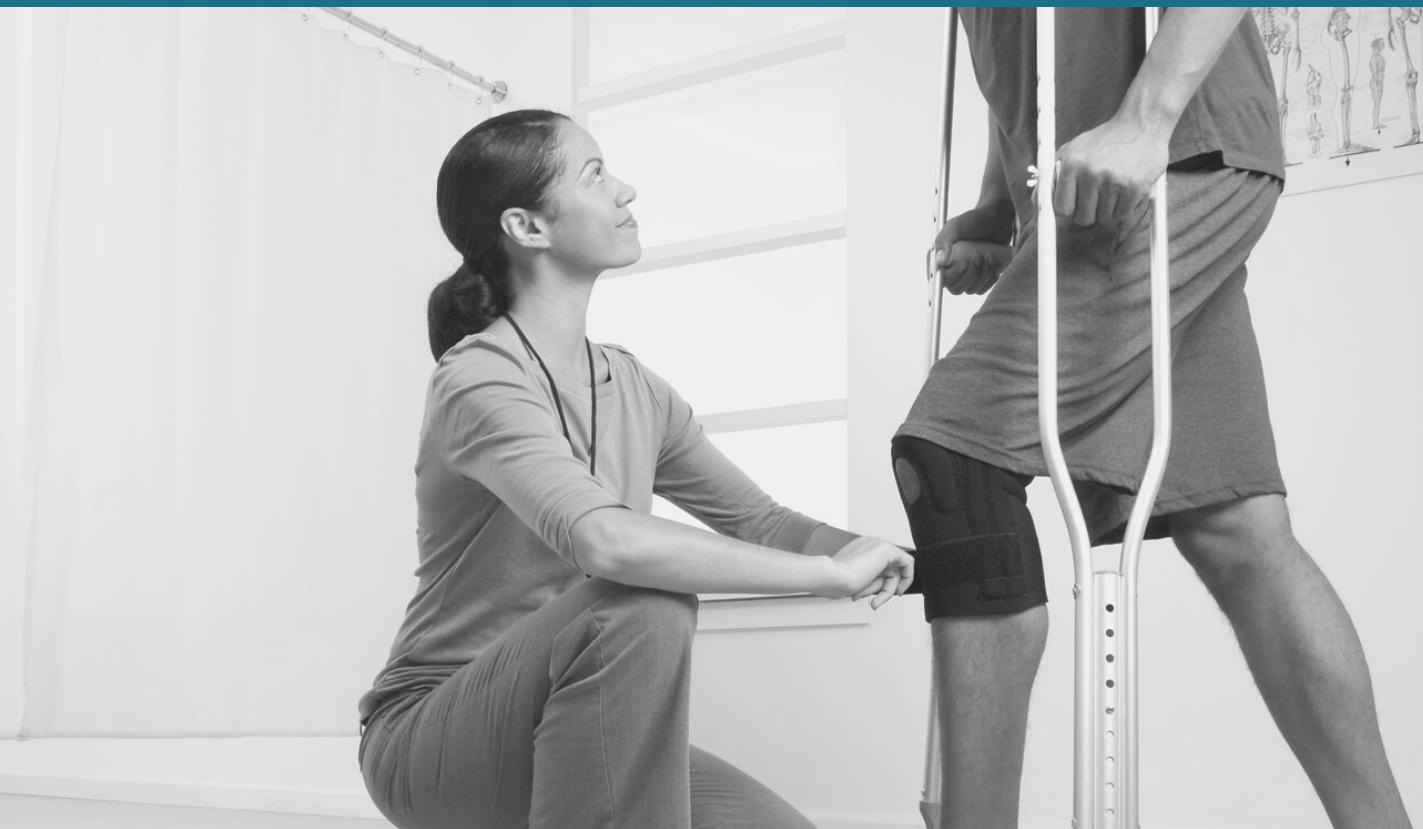
GATEWAY TO BETTER HEALTH PROGRAM ADDS NEW PHYSICAL FUNCTION BENEFIT

Beginning January 1, 2021, [Gateway to Better Health](#) (Gateway) will offer physical therapy, chiropractic, and occupational therapy to the Gateway population, nearly 20,000 individuals per year in the St. Louis region. This new benefit is part of the St. Louis Regional Health Commission's (RHC) [Chronic Pain Initiative](#), a regional effort to prevent and reduce the impact of chronic pain (maladaptive pain exceeding three months). Approximately [one in five U.S. adults suffer from chronic pain](#), and Gateway patients suffer from chronic pain at a rate greater than twice the national average.

"The evidence is clear: non-pharmacologic, multidisciplinary treatments can help people living with chronic pain; yet, many providers and patients lack the tools to manage chronic pain effectively," said Heidi B. Miller, MD, Medical Director for Gateway to Better Health and the project co-lead for RHC's Chronic Pain Initiative. "Our patients suffering from chronic pain are most likely to optimize function if services such as physical therapy and chiropractic care are available to them."

"This progressive initiative from the St. Louis Regional Health Commission via Gateway to Better Health will greatly reduce health inequities in our region," stated Patrick J. Battaglia, DC, DACBR, who serves as the Director of Health Policy and Interdisciplinary Care at Logan University and oversees integration at several community health centers. "Furthermore, the benefit will improve access to safe, effective, evidence-based care for the treatment of chronic pain. Physical function experts, such as chiropractors, occupational, and physical therapists, aim to reduce pain and improve function, helping patients maximize engagement in valued life activities. Besides its regional impact, this program should serve as a model nationally integrating non-pharmacologic therapies for pain management and functional restoration within the primary medical home."

[Read more on the RHC's blog.](#)



RHC LAUNCHES BEYOND PAIN STL WEBSITE

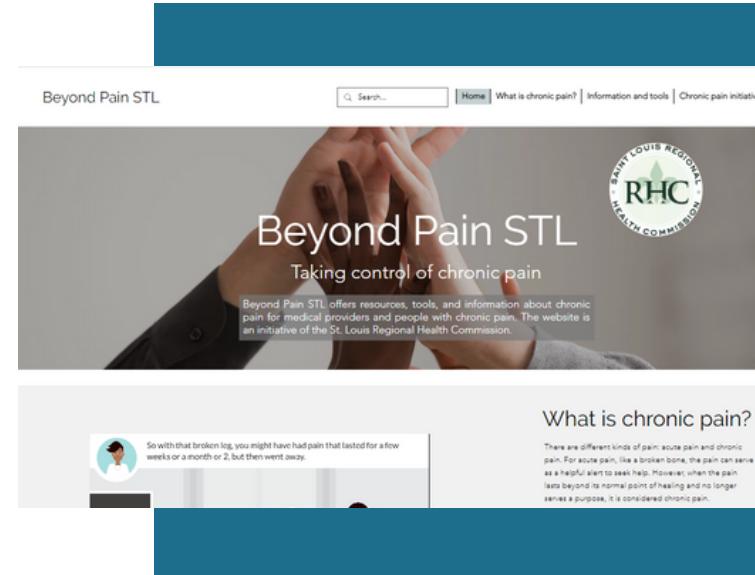
To accompany the new benefit, the St. Louis Regional Health Commission (RHC) also released a new website called www.BeyondPainSTL.com. Beyond Pain STL offers engaging tools, information, and [videos](#) to our community.

Beyond Pain STL strives to put the power back in the hands of people living with pain. The website covers a range of topics and strategies, including promoting healthy movement, regular sleep, and a balanced diet; however, the website prioritizes one topic in particular – emotional and mental health.

Angela Fleming Brown, CEO of the RHC, explains: “Emotional pain and chronic pain cannot be separated.” Chronic pain is recognized as a simultaneous disease of body and mind. More tools are needed to [educate providers](#) about the growing [body of research](#) on this [dual processing of chronic pain](#). Furthermore, [patients need accessible resources](#) on how to manage their pain – both physical and emotional. While people might need additional therapy or clinical services, Beyond Pain STL provides an entry point into the conversation about chronic physical and emotional pain and offers tools to help.

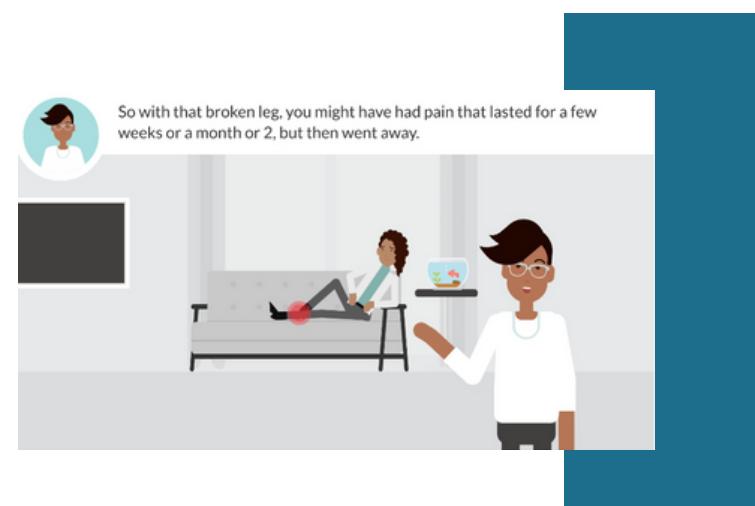
Merely providing information about chronic pain is not enough. Poverty and structural barriers often make following best practices for pain management impossible. Therefore, in addition to information and resources, [Beyond Pain STL shares advocacy opportunities](#) to address structural and systemic barriers that exacerbate chronic pain and create health disparities. Angela Brown explains, “We want people to feel empowered to take action to manage their pain; however, we also understand that segments of our population, particularly communities of color, have additional barriers to overcome to make positive lifestyle changes. Asking people to make impossible changes can feel disempowering. So, we committed to incorporating language about structural barriers and advocacy in our videos and website. Simultaneously, at the RHC, we are working to increase access to care and reduce health disparities through structural and political changes. We know chronic pain is complex, and its treatment will also be complex and multidimensional.”

[Read more about Beyond Pain STL on our blog.](#)



CONNECT ONLINE

Visit BeyondPainSTL.com to learn more about chronic pain and to connect to resources. Download and share Beyond Pain STL videos on the [RHC YouTube Channel](#).



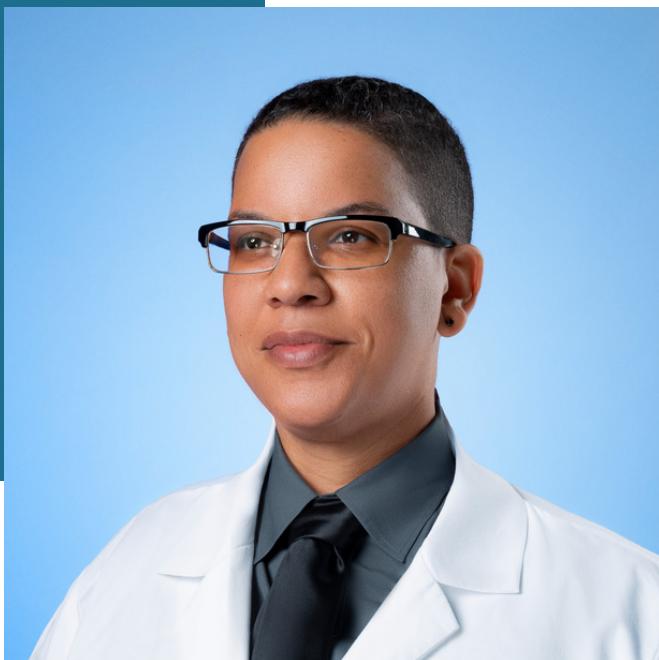
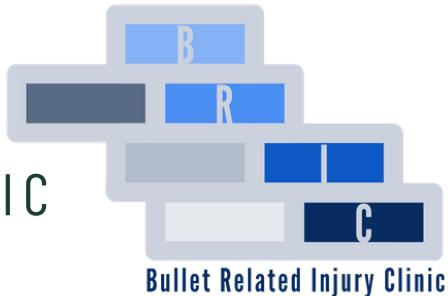
SPREAD THE WORD

- Send the [website](#) and [videos](#) to your friends, family members, providers, clients, and community. Share resources, including [sample social media posts](#) on our [media page](#), with your network.
- If you are with a service delivery organization, display the [videos](#) on the TVs in your waiting room and provide the summary pamphlet ([English](#) and [Spanish](#) versions are available).
- Follow the RHC on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) and share our content on chronic pain.

For more information about [Beyond Pain STL](#) or the [Chronic Pain Initiative](#), visit www.stlrc.org or contact Amanda Harris at aharris@stlrc.org.

REGIONAL COLLABORATION

BULLET RELATED INJURY CLINIC LAUNCHED NOVEMBER 2020



In the St. Louis region, hundreds of people with bullet-related injuries are treated on an outpatient basis and directly released from the Emergency Department each year. Without a determined need for additional inpatient follow-up, people are left to manage their wounds and pain alone. Dr. LJ Punch conceived of a new community-based clinic to reach this population and help them heal.

In November 2020, Dr. Punch launched the [Bullet Related Injury Clinic](#) (BRIC), a free six-week program designed to support participants manage their own self-care after a gunshot wound. The BRIC, which operates out of [the T](#), offers guidance on both physical and mental healing, including topics of wound-care, nutrition, sleep, stress, trauma, and pain management.

"We have been blown away by the depth of unmet need held in the lives and bodies of people who have been shot. We have been well equipped to meet much of the need," stated Dr. Punch. "We have established ourselves as trusted partners in self-care and recovery. We are saving people money, time, and heartache."

"The BRIC fills a gap in services for those who leave the hospital after a gun violence injury but have not yet been connected to service," explained Jessica Meyers, Coordinator of the St. Louis Area Violence Prevention Commission. "The BRIC's focus on holistic healing reminds all of us that trauma affects the mind and body, and we must help victims of violence to recover physically and mentally in order to heal after trauma."

BJC's Barnes-Jewish Hospital and SSM's DePaul Hospital serve as pilot sites for the new clinic and send referrals directly to the BRIC. The clinic also accepts community and self-referrals. The St. Louis Regional Health Commission has collaborated closely with Dr. Punch to help launch the BRIC, and the program received pilot funding from SSM, BJC, and Saint Louis MHB.

To learn more about the BRIC, visit www.thebric.org.

[Click here to make a referral](#) for a client, friend, or for yourself.



COVID-19 RESPONSE

PREPARESTL TEAMS UP WITH THE REGIONAL RESPONSE TEAM FOR VACCINE EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

The public discourse about the COVID-19 vaccine has been confusing for many people who are struggling to find accurate information from a trusted source. Myths and false information abound, and even the science and facts about the vaccine can be difficult for many to understand. Further complicating the matter are the politicization of the issue and the quickly eroding public trust in government and healthcare. Public health officials are in the difficult position of trying to tell people what to do in order to slow the spread of COVID, and it is clear that this approach has been met with limited success.

In response to this growing concern, the Regional Response Fund has awarded [PrepareSTL](#) and the [Regional Response Team \(RRT\)](#) \$248,000 for the implementation of a joint education campaign, built on the deep relationships and successful frameworks of these two initiatives.

The RRT is a collaboration of non-profit, public, and philanthropic organizations that are creating a centralized system of response to meet the social needs of community members most adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in the Greater St. Louis region. The collaborative is strengthened by the of involved organizations, who include social service providers, educational institutions, public health organizations, nonprofits, and more.

PrepareSTL is a collaborative campaign, [powered by the Missouri Foundation for Health](#) and in partnership with the Regional Health Commission, the City of St. Louis, St. Louis County, and other community health organizations. The campaign aims to help prepare all St. Louisans prevent the spread of COVID-19 and survive the pandemic physically, emotionally, and economically.

For the past several months, the RRT and PrepareSTL have been listening to their respective partners and community members to understand what people are thinking about the COVID-19 vaccine. As a result of this intent listening, one imperative emerged that serves as the core of this collaborative response: people do not want to be told what to do. People want access to factual information from a neutral source that can support their personal decision about whether or not taking the vaccine is the right choice for them and their families.

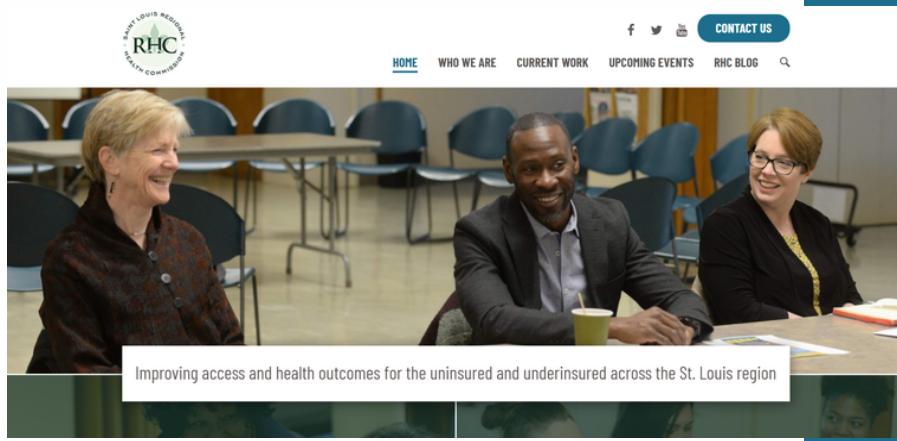
While the primary audiences of RRT and PrepareSTL are different, their ability to create a space where institutions, service providers, and community members can access the information needed to make decisions about the COVID vaccine is a critical component to increasing trust and accountability in social services and healthcare. Recognizing that this lack of trust stems from untreated, unhealed, and unresolved trauma at the hands of organizations and institutions that have done real hurt and harm to BIPOC (black, Indigenous and people of color) communities, this campaign seeks to support institutions in building trust and accountability, so that individuals are supported in their choice related to the COVID vaccine. This collaborative campaign will prioritize institutional and individual alignment and coordination to ensure a balanced approach to supporting informed choice.



For more information, including answers to frequently asked questions, check out the websites of [Regional Response Team](#) and [PrepareSTL](#).

Did you miss the campaign's kick off live stream about vaccine development and distribution? [Watch the recording here.](#)

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE!



Improving access and health outcomes for the uninsured and underinsured across the St. Louis region

RHC IN THE MEDIA

Visit our new website for [recent media coverage](#) and read what we have been up to on our [blog](#)!

RHC BLOG



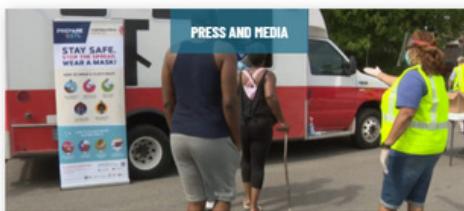
[Affinia Healthcare, Prepare STL and Schnucks perform free COVID-19 tests](#)

Saturday

August 8, 2020

ST. LOUIS, August 8, 2020 – Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Prepare STL and Affinia Healthcare have partnered to perform free COVID-19 tests and hand out thousands of PPE. Saturday was no different as the group made a stop in the parking lot of a Schnucks in north St. Louis. Health officials say they have a responsibility to ensure the safety of residents. Affinia Healthcare, Prepare STL,...

[READ MORE](#)



[Cloth mask giveaway in North St. Louis](#)

August 8, 2020

ST. LOUIS, August 8, 2020 – And it is all about the cloth face masks at this site in North St. Louis. The giveaway was hosted by PrepareSTL. Click here for the KSDK story.

[READ MORE](#)

[CHECK OUT MORE BLOG POSTS](#)

SIGN UP FOR OUR ADVOCACY ALERT

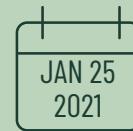
[Sign up for our RHC advocacy alert](#) to receive updates on key legislation and regional advocacy opportunities.

ABOUT

The [St. Louis Regional Health Commission](#) is a collaborative effort of St. Louis City, St. Louis County, the state of Missouri, health providers, and community members to improve the health of uninsured and underinsured citizens in St. Louis City and County.

Upcoming Events

Join us for an [upcoming meeting](#)! All RHC meetings are open to the public, and we invite you to get involved. Have questions? Contact Emily Vandas by emailing evandas@stlrc.org.



[Patient Advisory Board Meeting \(virtual\)](#)



[Coping with COVID: Virtual Town Hall \(virtual\)](#)



[Provider Services Advisory Board Meeting \(virtual\)](#)



[2021 St. Louis Mayoral Primary Candidate Forum \(virtual\)](#)



[Community Advisory Board Meeting \(virtual\)](#)

[VIEW MORE MEETINGS](#)

GET IN TOUCH

[Contact us online](#) or by calling our team at 314.446.6454.

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www.stlrc.org