We're going to check and see if you do!

Inside

Prostate Cancer: Why Black Men Face a Higher Risk

A 2019 Cleveland Clinic survey of approximately 1,174 U.S. men ages 18 and older found that 72% would rather do household chores than visit a doctor.

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Why does Gen Z seem politically disengaged?

Kayla Blake

SCAN TO LISTEN

A Gallup poll found that between 2020 and 2024, congressional approval never exceeded 36%. Gallup also found that trust in government and institutions was overwhelmingly low; only 9% of Americans had a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in Congress. This finding suggests that most people seem dissatisfied with their government. However, according to the Pew Research Center, many eligible voters did not vote in the 2024 election, especially people ages 18 to 29 years old.

Young Americans, according to the Movement Voter Project, have lower levels of voter turnout than other age groups. Low voter turnout and disengagement are common in Gen Z (often defined as people born between 1997 and 2012). With important upcoming elections, young voters' voices are crucial. These trends raise questions about why some young voters participate less in traditional political activities.

Regression and disappointment

Some older Americans have criticized Gen Z for low levels of electoral participation. Tom Nichols, a professor emeritus at the U.S. Naval War College, expressed frustration with young voters in a 2020 interview with the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs. "I have always been shocked that young people don't bother because it's not interesting and it's not fun and it doesn't feel like it's having an immediate impact," said Nichols.

However, research shows that Gen Z is not necessarily politically apathetic. In fact, some researchers and political observers argue that Gen Z's political behavior may reflect frustration with government institutions rather than disinterest.

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. often referenced the idea of an "arc of justice" in his speeches. King stated, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." This

AI-generated illustration. Credit ChatGPT

quote suggests that as time moves on, our society becomes more equitable and justice will prevail. Gen Z has arguably witnessed the opposite happen over the past decade.

According to Amnesty International, especially since the current Trump administration, LGBTQ+ protections have been rolled back and violence against the LGBTQ+ community has proliferated. Similarly, diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives have been attacked. Women's rights have been ignored; reproductive rights, particularly, have been negatively impacted the most. Lastly, environmental justice funds have been cut. Altogether, this suggests that much of the sociopolitical progress of the past few decades has been targeted.

Gen Z, as a result, has very limited trust in social and political institutions. A 2021 Springtide Research report found that 65% of people ages 13 to 25 disagree or strongly disagree that the government has done its best to protect them.

Gen Z is tired

A large portion of Gen

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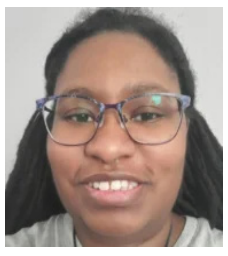
The appeal and pitfalls of online dating



Amaya Gentry

SCAN TO LISTEN

Online dating has become a common way for Americans to meet romantic partners, but researchers are still studying how it shapes the way people communicate. As the practice has become more widespread, the stigma surrounding it has diminished.

According to University of Wisconsin-Madison communication arts professor Catalina Toma, "People thought they [dating apps] were a crutch for the desperate, much in the same way newspaper personals were regarded ... These were technologies or media for people who struggle to get face-to-face dates, so they had to resort to online dating."

A 2019 study led by Stanford University sociologist Michael Rosenfeld and published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences found that approximately 39% of heterosexual couples formed their relationships online in 2017. Researchers identified 2013 as the approximate year online dating surpassed meeting through friends.

A 2020 Pew Research Center survey also reported that 48% of adults ages 18 to 29 and 38% of those ages 30 to 49 had used a dating site or app at least once. Separately, a 2020 Pew Research Center report found that 55% of lesbian, gay or bisexual adults had used a dating site or app.

According to a 2025 Forbes survey, more than half of the surveyed 18- to 29-year-olds and 37% of those ages 30 to 49 are currently online dating.

People use dating apps for varied reasons, including seeking relationships, pursuing casual encounters, meeting others and exploring the platforms. Researchers have examined whether preferences for online interaction and compulsive dating-app use are associated with emotional well-being and communication patterns.

The appeal of online dating

Many people choose online dating instead of meeting potential partners in person. In a Psychology

AI-generated illustration. Credit ChatGPT

Today article, psychologist and author Jessica De La Mare describes four motivations for using dating apps: relationship-oriented, social, self-development and entertainment or curiosity.

Relationship-oriented motivations include seeking a long-term partner or a casual encounter.

Social motivations may include following a trend, responding to recommendations, meeting new people or seeking validation.

People motivated by self-development may want to move on from a former partner, find someone with a similar sexual orientation or improve their flirting and social skills.

Those motivated by curiosity may chat while traveling, taking a work break or studying, or explore dating apps to learn how they work.

Continued on page 2

How Cleveland families can prepare for economic hard times

SCAN TO LISTEN

The Cleveland Observer

With 41% of Cuyahoga County households struggling to afford basic necessities, preparing for a recession, job loss or financial emergency can begin with practical steps — even when money is tight.

Credit ChatGPT

What would happen if your family suddenly lost a paycheck, faced rising grocery costs or received an unexpected medical bill?

For many Cleveland-area households, limited income and rising living costs make unexpected expenses difficult to manage.

According to United Way of Greater Cleveland's 2026 State of ALICE report, 41% of Cuyahoga County households, approximately 227,000, had incomes below the level needed to consistently afford basic necessities. The report uses 2024 household data. The percentage declined from 43% in the previous report.

ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. It describes households earning above the federal poverty level but below the cost of basic necessities. The 41% figure includes both ALICE households and those living in poverty.

"Families are working hard, but too many are walking a financial tightrope," said Sharon Sobol Jordan, president and CEO of United Way of Greater Cleveland, in the organization's June statement.

A Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland survey, conducted in March found that 72% of responding service organizations reported declining financial well-being among the low- and moderate-income populations they served. The survey included 108 organizations across the bank's four-state district.

Although no one can predict precisely when another recession will occur, families can take practical steps to reduce financial vulnerability.

Start with a household survival budget

Financial preparation begins with attitude. "Attitude on your outlook determines your outcome," said James Sander, founder of New Beginnings Financial Services. "Next, identify essential expenses: housing, utilities, groceries, transportation, medications, insurance and minimum debt payments."

Families should separate necessities from expenses they could reduce or temporarily eliminate. For example, a household spending $3,000 monthly on essentials would need $9,000 to cover three months without income or assistance.

That amount may be unrealistic for many families, but understanding monthly expenses helps identify financial risks.

Build savings, even if the amount is small

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau recommends establishing emergency savings for unexpected expenses or income interruptions.

In guidance for prospective homebuyers, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau says a good rule of thumb is to reserve at least three to six months' worth of expenses for emergencies.

For families living paycheck to paycheck, however, the first goal might be saving $100, then $500 and eventually $1,000.

Even modest savings can help avoid tradeoffs that affect health, career and family," Cary

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The appeal and pitfalls of online dating

From front page

Additionally, Alexandra McKellar-Kirchoff, writing for PsychAlive, identifies several reasons people use dating apps, including a reduced fear of rejection, convenience and the ability to remain anonymous until they are ready to reveal their identities.

Deception and online dating

Research has examined associations between dating-app use, online interaction preferences and emotional well-being.

A 2023 study published in Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace examined the relationship between dating-app use, preference for online social interaction and emotional well-being. The study examined 361 online dating app users in China. The study found an association between a preference for online social interaction and compulsive dating-app use.

In a 2018 study, Stanford researchers Jeffrey Hancock and David Markowitz examined deception in mobile dating conversations. They recruited more than 200 users and analyzed more than 3,000 messages sent after an initial match but before the users met in person.

Nearly two-thirds of participants reported not telling any lies, while approximately 7% of messages were reported as deceptive.

The researchers found that some deceptive messages involved exaggerating personal interests or availability to appear more attractive. About 30% of the deceptive messages were classified as "butler lies," or polite deceptions used to initiate or end conversations.

The findings suggest that deception in dating-app messages was relatively uncommon and often served strategic purposes. The researchers concluded that most messages in their sample were honest, which they described as a positive step toward building trust in a new romantic relationship.

Misrepresentation and online dating

The dating app Hinge introduced the term "Kittenfishing" in 2017. It is a form of online dating misrepresentation that involves exaggerating or selectively presenting personal information to appear more appealing, and attractive to potential matches.

The term comes from the larger term catfishing, which involves creating a false online identity to deceive another person, sometimes for financial, emotional or other reasons. Examples include exaggerating height, using outdated or heavily edited photos or overstating personal qualities.

Misleading profiles can create unrealistic expectations that may lead to disappointment when people meet in person. Researchers and dating experts like Amy Chan, author of the book "Unsingle," recommend accurate profile information to help set realistic expectations before an in-person meeting.

Photo by Omar Lopez-Rincon/Unsplash

Online dating has become a common way to meet romantic partners, changing how people initiate relationships and communicate. Online dating is particularly common among younger adults, and research has found that online platforms play an important role in how LGBTQ+ people meet partners.

Dating apps can facilitate communication, but some users engage in deceptive self-presentation or use strategic messages to manage conversations. The 2018 study found that most participants reported not lying in dating-app conversations, although a small proportion of messages were deceptive.

While people date online for many different reasons, it appears that most people approach online dating honestly in order to get the most out of their experience online.

Amaya Gentry has a bachelor's degree in biology and has worked as a quality control chemist.

Why does Gen Z seem politically disengaged?

From front page

Z's political memory is marked by significant regression, especially for the most vulnerable populations. However, that does not mean that young people are apathetic- many are just skeptical and frustrated. The November 2025 Harvard Public Opinion Project polled 2,040 young people ages 18 to 29. Ultimately, researchers found that only 13% of respondents believed the country is headed in the right direction. The study also identified instability in young Americans' lives, including "widespread financial, emotional and social strain."

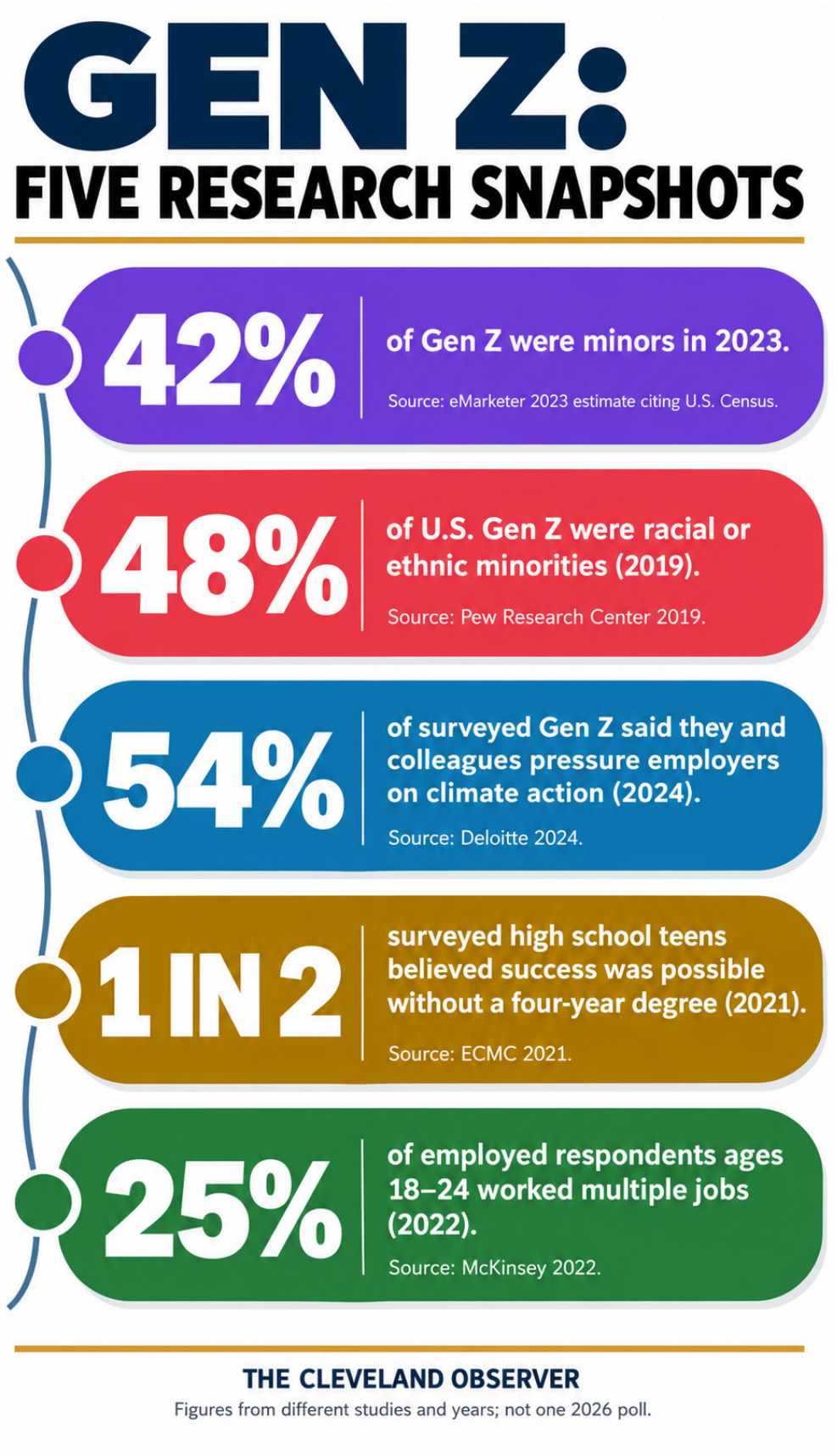
Gen Z is the first generation to live under the uncertainty of uncontrolled advanced AI, and it raises concerns about future employment and job security. According to Fight for a Living Wage, Gen Z also faces significant barriers to homeownership, including housing affordability, stagnant minimum wages and other inequalities. The current sociopolitical climate can be daunting for anyone, but especially for a young adult trying to build their life. This can result in fatigue when it comes to political activism and engagement.

Lack of change

Some Gen Zers feel as if government officials are not focused on benefiting the public. Merel Walker, a current undergraduate student at Cleveland State University, stated that she votes in every election and is very politically active. However, she believes that many other Gen Zers may be discouraged by a "lack of change." Walker said, "We are told to use our voices, but my peers rarely see any real change that comes with voting."

There is hope

Despite political disillusionment, Gen Z is largely very politically knowledgeable. Melissa Deckman, an American political scientist, stated in a September 2024 PBS interview that Gen Z is passionate about gender equality, climate change and preventing gun violence. Deckman stated that social media has also provided young people with additional avenues for political discussion and activism.



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In other words, Gen Z's political engagement just looks much different than older generations. Gen Z tends to prioritize social media and other nongovernmental strategies to create political impact. For example, many Gen Z women activists helped amplify the MeToo movement on digital platforms to speak out against misogyny and call for an inclusive democracy.

Younger voters also differ from older generations because of their political focus. According to New York Times writer Michelle Cottle's December 2023 article titled "What Are Young Voters Looking For?", younger voters are less interested in political parties and candidates, and more focused on advocacy around specific issues. As Cottle stated, "they are driven by issues that speak to their lives, their core values, or, ideally, both."

"The Ballot or the Bullet"

Although Gen Z is politically involved in alternative ways, voter turnout is still extremely important. In 1964, civil rights leader Malcolm X delivered a speech here in Cleveland, Ohio, titled "The Ballot or the Bullet." Malcolm X was deeply critical of the American political system. In that speech, he stated that the American government is "responsible for the oppression and exploitation and degradation of black people in this country".

Although he is referring to the Black American experience specifically, the sentiment is similar to Gen Z's condemnation of the government. According to the National Museum of African American History and Culture, Malcolm X used this speech to encourage Black Americans to exercise their political power to make change- despite his systemic critiques.

When we vote

According to FairVote, high voter turnout is crucial for the health of our democracy. When we vote, we elect those who represent us, make decisions on important legislation and impact the state, local and national governments. APIAVote says that voting allows us to make decisions on health care, immigration, gun safety and even the potholes near your house.

Abstaining from voting takes away community power. This midterm election, Gen Z voters have the opportunity to make a positive difference in American politics.

Freedom is a constant struggle

However, none of us should stop at voting. Although voting is a crucial first step, sustained community engagement is necessary to preserve democracy between elections.

The Policy Circle states that voting, volunteering, public dialogue, advocacy and organizing are crucial. When we stay informed and active, we hold leaders accountable and strengthen our communities. As Angela Davis' book title states, "Freedom Is a Constant Struggle".

This election season, if you wants to make an impact, start by showing up to the polls. However, tangible change requires being active and engaged. This November, you are encouraged, everyone, young and old, to vote to protect democracy. Everyone is encouraged to keep up the momentum and fight for justice everyday.

Kayla Blake is a recent graduate of George Washington University.

October 2026: Cleveland City Council legislation update

SCAN TO LISTEN

The Cleveland Observer

Pending proposals would revise lead-safe rental rules, purchase Miles School for public-safety offices and extend Cleveland's data-center permit moratorium.

The City of Cleveland introduces legislation to update its Lead Safe Certificate System and strengthen protections for children and tenants. Credit: City of Cleveland.

The Council authorizes $1.25M for eviction legal aid

On Oct. 12, Cleveland City Council passed amended emergency Ordinance No. 1031-2026, authorizing the director of community development to enter into agreements with The Legal Aid Society, the lead partner organization, for up to $1.25 million to provide legal services to eligible residents facing eviction proceedings. Council also approved park-related funding tied to sewer-district easements, while proposals affecting rental housing, public-safety offices and road construction remained under review.

Council also approved park-related funding tied to sewer-district easements, while proposals affecting rental housing, public-safety offices and road construction remained under review.

The actions are reported in the Oct. 16, 2026, City Record. The edition covers Council's Oct. 12 meeting, Oct. 12 zoning decisions and legislation passed Oct. 5. It does not establish that pending first-reading measures were later approved.

Council authorizes eviction legal services

Council passed Ordinance No. 1031-2026 by a 13-0 vote. The amended measure authorizes the community development director to enter into one or more agreements with The Legal Aid Society as the lead partner for legal representation of covered individuals in eviction proceedings.

The authorization sets funding at $1.25 million from two city funds. The Record does not identify other partner organizations, estimate how many residents could receive representation or document a later agreement date.

Why it matters: The measure supports access to counsel in Cleveland Housing Court, but the authorization is not evidence that the entire amount has been contracted or spent. Program reach and outcomes remain undocumented in this edition.

Park funds accompany sewer-project easements

Council also voted 13-0 to pass Ordinance No. 688-2026, granting the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District easement rights at or under city property associated with Emery and Estabrook parks for the Big Creek Storage Tunnel Project.

The amended ordinance allocates $220,400 in easement-sale proceeds for Emery Park improvements and $56,400 for Estabrook Park improvements. It separately authorizes the city to accept a $450,000 cash gift for improvements at Emery Park.

The ordinance also provides for agreements concerning the removal or replacement of certain utility poles along West 130th Street after the sewer project is completed, at the sewer district's cost and by Dec. 31, 2032.

The Big Creek Tunnel (BCT) project is part of Project Clean Lake. Credit: Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District

Why it matters: The legislation reserves project-related proceeds for the affected parks, but the Record does not describe the improvements, their costs or when residents would see the work completed.

Lead-safe rental overhaul remains pending

Council referred Ordinance No. 1244-2026, a broad proposed rewrite of Cleveland's rental-registration and lead-safe certification requirements. It was not passed in the Oct. 12 proceedings.

Among other provisions, the proposal would require an annual registration application for non-owner-occupied residential units, set a $70 fee per unit subject to stated caps and possible exemptions, and require a separate certificate approving rental occupancy. For applicable properties, an owner would have to document lead-safe certification along with compliance involving unresolved violations, property taxes and certain city charges.

The proposal describes lead-safe certification terms ranging from three years to 20 years, depending on test results, a building's age and documented replacement or abatement of specified components. It also would require a city license for professionals conducting local lead tests used in certification applications. If enacted, the rewritten provisions specify a Feb. 1, 2027, effective date.

Why it matters: The proposal could change the documentation, testing and fees required before rental occupancy. Because it was only introduced and referred, none of the proposed changes should be treated as enacted by this edition.

Miles School public-safety plan is under review

A separate first-reading proposal, Ordinance No. 1242-2026, would authorize the city to purchase and redevelop Miles School at 11918 Miles Ave. for

Continued on page 5

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CLEVELAND OBSERVER

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PUBLISHER
Ron Calhoun

MANAGING EDITOR
Marva White

EDITORS
Lisa O'Brien
Rosie Palfy

PARTNERS
The Cleveland Foundation

ADVERTISING
sales@cleobserver.com

ADVISORY BOARD
Sheila Ferguson,
Ron Harris, Devon Jones,
Mark Silverberg

PRINT LAYOUT / GRAPHICS
Ron Calhoun

info@cleobserver.com
2400 Orange Ave. Box 5324
Cleveland, OH 44106
216-236-8081

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How Cleveland families can prepare for economic hard times

From page 2

Sinnett, senior manager of personal financial planning at the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, said in an April 2026 statement.

Emergency funds should remain accessible, preferably in federally insured savings accounts rather than investments that could lose value. Saving should not take priority over immediate necessities such as rent, food or medication.

Reduce debt and protect income

High-interest credit cards and variable-rate loans can become especially burdensome during financial instability.

Families should review outstanding debt, avoid unnecessary borrowing and balance repayment with maintaining emergency savings.

Workers can also prepare by updating resumes, developing job skills and exploring employment opportunities. OhioMeansJobs Cuyahoga County offers free employment assistance, including job-search support and training resources. Workers experiencing job loss or reduced hours should promptly investigate eligibility for Ohio unemployment benefits.

Prepare for essential household needs

Gradually purchasing additional shelf-stable food, hygiene products and household necessities can reduce pressure during an emergency.

Families might build a one- or two-week reserve, depending on available income and storage space. Additional purchases should not interfere with current bills or medication.

Residents experiencing food insecurity can seek assistance through the Greater Cleveland Food Bank, which maintains a directory of food pantries and community meal programs.

Protect housing, utilities and health care

Families anticipating difficulty paying rent or mortgages should contact landlords, mortgage servicers or housing counselors before falling significantly behind.

Eligible Cleveland renters facing eviction may qualify for free legal representation through the city's Right to Counsel program generally covers renters facing eviction who have at least one child in the household and income at or below the federal poverty guidelines. Other tenants may qualify for legal assistance outside the program.

Income-eligible residents may also qualify for energy assistance. The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) provides a one-time annual benefit toward eligible heating costs, while the Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP) establishes income-based monthly payments for eligible customers of regulated gas or electric utilities.

Losing employment can also mean losing health insurance. According to HealthCare.gov, workers generally have 60 days after losing job-based coverage to enroll in a Health Insurance Marketplace plan.

Other options may include Medicaid or temporary continuation of employer-sponsored insurance through COBRA. Eligible workers generally must pay the full COBRA premium and an administrative fee.

Financial planning has limits

Individual budgeting cannot eliminate the larger economic pressures affecting Cleveland households.

The Cleveland Fed's June 2026 report, "When every dollar counts: Inside the economic struggles of workers who earn low to moderate incomes," describes workers adjusting spending, relying on credit and seeking assistance to meet basic needs.

Taken together, the Cleveland Fed findings and United Way's ALICE data suggest that conventional savings advice becomes difficult to follow when household income falls short of essential expenses.

"Effort isn't the issue. Access to opportunity is," Jordan said in United Way's June statement.

Financial preparedness matters, but earnings sufficient to cover basic necessities, affordable housing, stable employment and accessible health care are also important for household resilience.

What families can do now

During the next 30 days, households can review essential expenses, identify unnecessary costs, establish realistic savings goals and organize financial documents.

Family members should also discuss how they would manage reduced income, including transportation, child care and housing responsibilities.

No household can control when the economy weakens. Having a plan before trouble arrives, however, can provide more options when difficult circumstances arise.

Where Cleveland families can find help

- United Way 211: Dial 211 or visit 211oh.org for assistance referrals.
- Greater Cleveland Food Bank: 216-738-2067. Food and benefits assistance.
- Cuyahoga Job and Family Services: 844-640-6446. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, commonly known as SNAP, Medicaid and other benefits.
- Step Forward: 216-480-4327. Energy assistance.
- The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland: 888-817-3777. Free eviction help.
- OhioMeansJobs Cuyahoga County: 216-777-8200. Employment services.
- Urban League of Greater Cleveland: 216-622-0999 Financial coaching and employment resources.

Eligibility and available assistance vary by program.

October 2026 Cleveland City Council legislation update

From page 4

Fire and EMS administration and other Public Safety offices. The legislation also contemplates vocational programming developed with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District.

The proposed purchase price could not exceed the property's stated $975,000 appraised value. CMSD would lease back classrooms and related space for up to 30 years, with annual rent of no more than $21,000 and other consideration credited against the purchase price. The city would receive purchase-price credit for improvements benefiting the school district, according to the proposal.

Why it matters: The plan could combine public-safety administration and student programming at one site. The Record does not provide a renovation budget, construction schedule or final agreement, and Council had not approved the proposal in the proceedings reported here.

Airport baggage upgrade took effect after earlier vote

The edition also publishes legislation passed Oct. 5. Ordinance No. 924-2026, recorded as effective Oct. 6, authorizes one or more contracts with Cleveland Terminal & Equipment Company to design and construct an upgrade to the in-line baggage system at Cleveland Hopkins International Airport.

The contracts may total no more than $6.5 million. The ordinance says the work is intended to accommodate forecast passenger growth, but the supplied pages do not give a construction schedule or establish that the full authorized amount has been contracted or spent.

Why it matters: Baggage-handling capacity affects airport operations and passenger service. The authorization establishes a financial ceiling, not a final expenditure or completed improvement.

Zoning board approves several projects

The Board of Zoning Appeals reported several approvals from Oct. 12. They included conditional approval for a proposed expansion at 4403 St. Clair Ave. involving an event center, microbrewery and restaurant, fitness and art studios, offices and dwelling units.

Miles School at 11918 Miles Ave. to be purchased and redevelopd for Fire and EMS administration and other Public Safety offices.Credit: mycleschool.org

The board also approved a proposed 4,200-square-foot, state-licensed adult marijuana dispensary with accessory parking at 4002 Jennings Road. The report does not provide individual board votes or establish that construction is complete or that every other required permit has been issued.

Other proposals to watch

Council referred a proposal authorizing an estimated city share of $4,710,524 for resurfacing Shaker Boulevard from Buckeye Road to Cleveland's eastern boundary, subject to adjustment based on actual project costs.

Another pending measure would authorize acceptance of a $1 million federal grant for NORA Village, described as two duplex buildings with recovery housing and permanent supportive housing units. The Record does not state the project address or construction schedule.

Council also referred legislation that would extend the city's data-center permit moratorium from Oct. 20 until the earlier of new regulations taking effect or Jan. 29, 2027. Because Ordinance No. 1246-2026 remained pending, this edition does not establish that the extension took effect.

Prostate cancer: Why early detection matters

Devon Jones

SCAN TO LISTEN

In partnership with the Village of Healing and the Cuyahoga County Board of Health

A 2019 Cleveland Clinic survey of approximately 1,174 U.S. men ages 18 and older found that 72% would rather do household chores than visit a doctor.

While this statistic may seem humorous at first, avoiding medical care can delay the detection of diseases, including prostate cancer. Early detection may identify prostate cancer before it spreads, potentially expanding treatment options. However, screening also has potential risks and limitations.

What is prostate cancer?

According to the Mayo Clinic, prostate cancer is a growth of cells that starts in the prostate. The prostate is a gland in the male reproductive system, located below the bladder and in front of the rectum. It produces fluid that forms part of semen.

Treatment depends on the cancer's stage, grade and other individual factors, so early detection may offer more treatment options.

The American Cancer Society recommends that men discuss the potential benefits, risks and uncertainties of prostate cancer screening with a healthcare provider beginning at age 50 for men at average risk and expected to live at least 10 more years.

Men, age 45" to "Men at high risk, including Black men and those with a father or brother diagnosed before age 65, should discuss screening at age 45, or at age 40 if more than one first-degree relative was diagnosed early.

According to the CDC, prostate cancer is the most common cancer among men in the United States, excluding nonmelanoma skin cancer, and is a leading cause of cancer death among men across racial and Hispanic-origin groups.

Older age, family history and Black ancestry are established risk factors. Obesity has been associated with an increased risk of aggressive prostate cancer and death from the disease.

According to HealthyNEO, Black men in Cuyahoga County experience a significantly higher burden of prostate cancer than white men. From 2019 to 2023, the age-adjusted prostate cancer death rate among Black men was approximately 39 deaths per 100,000 population, compared to approximately 18.5 deaths per 100,000 population among white men, meaning Black men died from prostate cancer at more than 2.1 times the rate of white men during this period.

Symptoms of prostate cancer

According to the American Cancer Society, prostate cancer may not cause symptoms in its early stages. When symptoms do occur, they can vary depending on how advanced the disease is.

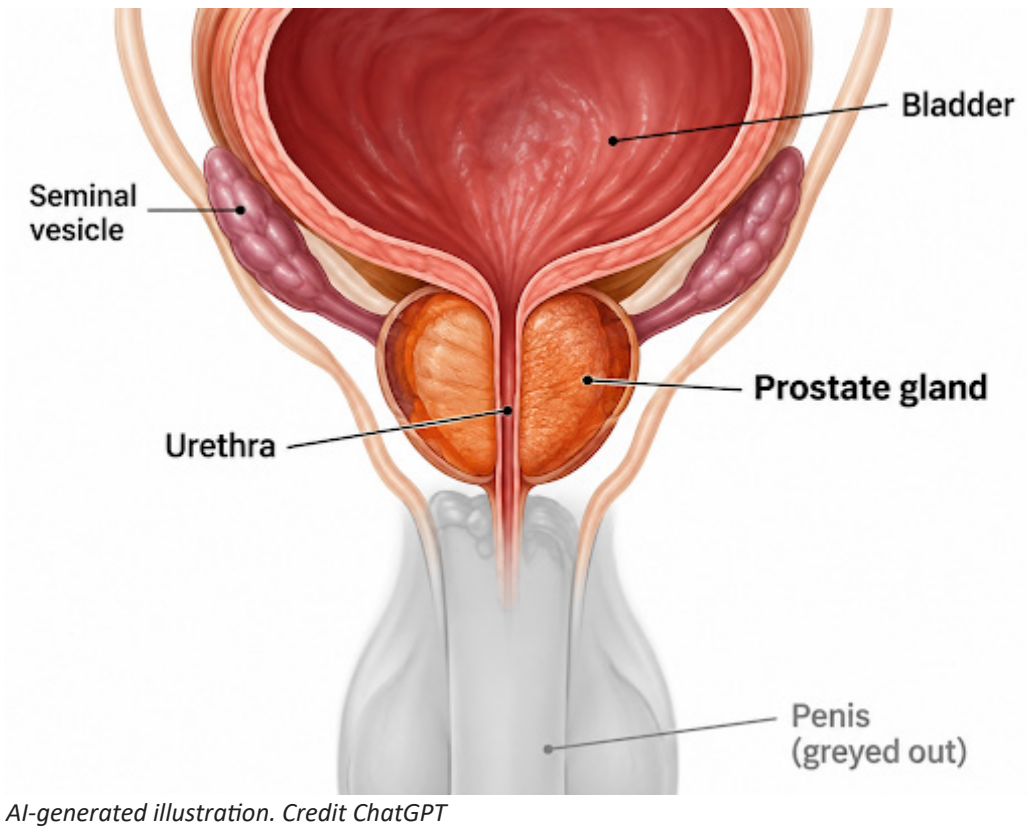
Because prostate cancer may not cause symptoms in its early stages, men should discuss whether screening is appropriate for them with a healthcare provider, particularly if they have risk factors.

Possible signs and symptoms

According to the American Cancer Society, early signs and symptoms of prostate cancer may include:

Some men may experience:

- Changes in urination, such as a weaker urine stream, difficulty starting urination or needing to urinate more frequently, especially during the night. (Could be caused by other conditions; does not automatically mean a cancer diagnosis)
- The presence of blood in the urine or semen. (Could be caused by other conditions; does not automatically mean a cancer diagnosis)



AI-generated illustration. Credit ChatGPT

Symptoms of advanced prostate cancer

If prostate cancer has spread beyond the prostate gland, symptoms may include:

- Difficulty achieving or maintaining an erection.
- Persistent pain in the hips, back, ribs or other bones.
- Weakness, tingling or numbness in the legs or feet.
- New loss of bladder or bowel control, particularly with back pain, leg weakness or numbness, requires urgent medical evaluation.
- Unexplained weight loss.
- Ongoing fatigue or unusual tiredness.

Important: Many of these symptoms can be caused by conditions other than prostate cancer. Men experiencing any of these signs should consult a healthcare provider for evaluation and any indicated diagnostic testing.

How to get tested

Early prostate cancer often causes no symptoms, which is why decisions about screening are made before symptoms develop. Symptoms can occur as the cancer grows or advances, but symptoms alone cannot establish the stage.

In many cases, the first step is a prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test. The PSA test measures the level of prostate-specific antigen, a protein produced by cells in the prostate, in the blood. Both normal and cancerous prostate cells can produce PSA. No single PSA level definitively diagnoses prostate cancer. PSA can be found in semen, but there is also a small amount found in the blood.

A PSA test alone cannot determine whether a man has prostate cancer. If test results suggest a possibility of prostate cancer, the clinician may recommend additional testing, including imaging or a prostate biopsy. A biopsy is a procedure in which small samples of the prostate are removed and examined under a microscope.

According to the American Cancer Society, a clinician may also perform a digital rectal exam (DRE) as part of the evaluation.

A patient may also be referred to a urologist. During a physical exam, a qualified clinician conducts a DRE by inserting a gloved, lubricated finger into the rectum to feel for any bumps or hard areas on the prostate. An abnormal DRE may lead to further evaluation.

A DRE alone cannot diagnose prostate cancer or determine whether it has spread. The clinician decides which examinations and tests are appropriate based on symptoms, risk and prior results.

A prostate biopsy may cause discomfort. The care team can explain pain-control options, which may include local anesthesia.

How does prostate cancer progress?

Prostate cancer develops when changes, or mutations, occur in the DNA of cells within the prostate gland. These abnormal cells can grow uncontrollably, forming a tumor that may eventually invade nearby tissues or spread to other parts of the body.

Some prostate cancers grow slowly and remain confined to the prostate, while others may invade nearby tissues or spread to distant organs. Treatment decisions depend on the cancer's characteristics and the patient's circumstances.

Prostate cancer, similar to other cancers, happens in stages. Stages of prostate cancer define how much cancer is in the body; the stage the individual is in determines what treatment may be best for the individual.

According to the American Cancer Society, the most widely used staging system for prostate cancer is provided by the American Joint Committee on Cancer.

The AJCC staging system considers the extent of the primary tumor (T), regional lymph node involvement (N), distant metastasis (M), PSA level and Grade Group.

1. The extent of the main tumor (T category)
2. Whether the cancer has spread to nearby lymph nodes (N category)
3. Whether the cancer has metastasized to other parts of the body (M category)
4. The PSA (prostate-specific antigen) level
5. The grade group (based on the Gleason score), which measures how likely it is to grow and spread quickly. This is determined by the results of the prostate biopsy (or surgery)

Stages of prostate cancer

- **Stage I** prostate cancer is localized and generally has features associated with a lower risk of progression.
- **Stage II** prostate cancer remains confined to the prostate but is classified using additional factors, including PSA and Grade Group.
- **Stage III** generally refers to cancer with higher-risk features that remain without distant metastasis; depending on the subgroup, it may have grown beyond the prostate.
- **Stage IVA:** Cancer has spread to nearby lymph nodes but has

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Baby, now what? Disparities in maternity care

Jennifer Bailey

"Baby, now what?" is a new series exploring the mental, physical and everyday realities of motherhood.

In the minutes, hours and days after giving birth, many mothers focus on bonding with their babies. However, postpartum complications can arise quickly. Ideally, medical teams resolve these issues promptly, yet Black women in the U.S. continue to face documented disparities in maternity care.

AI-generated illustration. Credit ChatGPT

Stories of loss, dismissal and mistrust

This was the experience of Kira Dixon Johnson. On April 12, 2016, Johnson gave birth to her son, Langston, by cesarean section at Cedars-Sinai Hospital in Los Angeles. Shortly after, signs of complications emerged, including blood in her Foley catheter. Ten hours passed before Johnson was taken for emergency surgery, where surgeons found more than three liters of blood in her abdomen. She died from blood loss.

Despite repeated pleas from her husband, Charles Johnson, to perform surgery, the requests were ignored. Charles Johnson lost his wife, and their sons, Charles V and Langston, lost their mother. Her death is not an isolated incident.

Dr. Shalon Irving, a CDC epidemiologist and Yolanda Mention are other examples of Black women who died after giving birth due to complications of high blood pressure; public health agencies like the National Institutes of Health warn that during pregnancy and the postpartum period, blood pressure of 140/90 mm Hg requires careful evaluation and management. In comparison, 160/110 mm Hg is considered a hypertensive emergency. A dangerously high reading does not require both numbers to cross the threshold.

According to a March 2026 report from the National Center for Health Statistics, the maternal mortality rate in 2024 was 44.8 deaths per 100,000 live births among non-Hispanic Black women, compared with 14.2 among non-Hispanic white women.

The rate for Black women was more than three times that for white women. Maternal mortality includes deaths during pregnancy or within 42 days after pregnancy ends from causes related to or aggravated by pregnancy or its management, excluding accidental or incidental causes.

A 2023 CDC survey of U.S. mothers found that about 30% of Black respondents reported mistreatment during maternity care, while 40% reported discrimination. Across all respondents, 20% reported mistreatment and 29% reported discrimination. Nearly 45% said they had held back from asking questions or discussing concerns with their healthcare provider.

Mistrust of medical institutions among some Black Americans is shaped in part by a history of medical exploitation, coercion and unequal treatment. J. Marion Sims, a 19th-century physician often called the "father of modern gynecology", performed experimental surgeries on enslaved women who could not freely consent under slavery, leading many Black women to distrust the practice altogether.

In the 1960s, civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer underwent a hysterectomy without her informed consent, according to historical accounts. The practice of coercive sterilization became known as a "Mississippi appendectomy."

In 1973, the case became known as Relf v. Weinberger, bringing national attention to the issue when in another case, two Black sisters, ages 12 and 14, were sterilized without their parents' informed consent.

The broader litigation challenged sterilization practices and called for stronger protections regarding federally funded programs. Decades later, racial myths and biases regarding pain tolerance still persist in medicine.

A 2016 study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences found that approximately half of the white medical students and residents surveyed endorsed at least one false belief about biological differences between Black and white people, such as the misconception that Black people have thicker skin.

The researchers found that trainees who endorsed these false beliefs tended to rate Black patients' pain lower and make less accurate treatment recommendations.

Changing the narrative

Historically, many Black women have experienced dismissal and mistrust in their interactions with the medical establishment. For Black women to receive appropriate care and support, this pattern must change.

LaKendra Johnson, a licensed professional clinical counselor and perinatal mental health specialist who founded Changing Lanes Counseling Services, emphasizes patient advocacy. Because medical appointments often trigger anxiety, Johnson advises women to write down questions or concerns before appointments.

Johnson said that self-advocacy with healthcare providers is imperative and advised patients to consider switching providers if they feel unheard.

"At the end of the day, this is your life, and this is the life of your child. If you're with the person [medical professional] who is not listening to your concerns, not taking it seriously, making you feel like you are difficult or that angry Black woman because you came in and asked questions about breast pumps and you're only four months pregnant, that shouldn't be the case," Johnson said.

The deaths of Irving, Mention and Johnson underscore the importance of discussing birth and emergency plans with healthcare providers. LaKendra Johnson recommends discussing possible complications and response plans before labor begins.

"Have those conversations before being in the birthing suite where everything is a bit more

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Prostate cancer: Why early detection matters

From page 6

not spread to distant organs or tissues.

- Stage IVB: Cancer has spread to distant parts of the body, such as the bones, liver, lungs, or distant lymph nodes.

Note: These are simplified descriptions. Prostate cancer staging is based on several factors, including the tumor's extent (T stage), prostate-specific antigen (PSA) level, Grade Group, and whether cancer has spread to lymph nodes or other parts of the body.

Call to action

Some men have a stigma associated with going to the doctor; there may be a fear or concern about them finding something wrong. This is understandable because it may lead to more doctor visits and anxiety about their health.

However, this stigma needs to be addressed because there is great risk in not going to the doctor. Detecting prostate cancer at an earlier stage may expand treatment options. Men should discuss the potential benefits and harms of screening with a healthcare professional. The appropriate age and frequency depend on age, risk factors, health and the screening guideline being followed.

PSA screening can help detect prostate cancer early, but it may also lead to false-positive results and additional testing, including biopsies. In some cases, screening identifies slow-growing cancers that may never have caused harm, which is why experts recommend discussing the benefits and risks of screening with a healthcare provider before deciding whether to be tested.

Devon Jones is a licensed social worker and a grants program manager at the Cuyahoga County Board of Health. He serves as co-chair of the Village of Healing's Black Men's Health Council.

Column: My Uncle John said…

Little Miss Marva Bean

My Uncle John is so kind! He really cares about helping others make smart choices about voting. A church visitor told my Uncle John that voting is an inconvenience.

The man went on, saying he couldn't get time off work, and even if he could, he still wouldn't have a way to get to his polling place. He ended by saying, "Plus, finding someone to watch my kids is a whole 'notha task." My Uncle John smiled, put his hand on the man's shoulder and said, "I can help with all of that."

The man wasn't alone. A December 2024 Pew Research Center report found that 15% of eligible nonvoters identified inconvenience as a major reason they did not vote. The problems the man listed weren't new.

The problems the man described have also been documented in research. A September 2020 report by Demos examined racial disparities in absentee ballot requests and voter turnout in Cuyahoga County. The report also identified barriers to voting that included inflexible work schedules, lack of childcare and limited access to public transportation, particularly for Black and Latino communities.

Couldn't get time off work

My Uncle John said he empathized with the man and others who shared his plight. Plight was one of my spelling words last week. It has a lot of definitions, but Merriam-Webster defines it in this context as "an unfortunate, difficult, or precarious situation."

My uncle said that when he was working, he valued voting enough to arrange time off on Election Day. He used personal leave, sick leave and vacation time, exchanged shifts and borrowed hours from coworkers to make sure he could vote.

Sometimes, Election Day fell on his day off, and sometimes it didn't. Most times he only needed a couple of hours for traveling. Each time, he had to make a conscious effort to do whatever he needed so he could vote.

No transportation to polls

Some voters have polling places in or near their neighborhoods. My parents vote at my school three blocks from our home. When the weather was good, we walked there. While my parents voted, I played on the playground with other neighborhood kids.

My Uncle John said that if walking to the polls is not an option and a friend or family member cannot provide a ride, Lyft is offering a 50% discount, up to $10, on one eligible ride to a polling place on Nov. 3, using the code VOTE26. The offer is subject to availability and the company's terms.

The Cuyahoga County Board of Elections is at 1803 Superior Ave. in Cleveland. For the Nov. 3 election, early-voting hours vary by date; voters should check the board's website before visiting. The RTA bus number 3 passes it. A one-way fare is $2.50. Check the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority's website for current routes and fares.

No childcare

My Uncle John said that sometimes having no one to watch one's children was a barrier for some parents trying to vote back in his day. When he first started voting, he didn't have the same choices that people have now. Voters should check current state and county rules for early in-person and absentee voting.

If childcare is a challenge, early voting may be a possibility. Some of the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections hours are even on specified weekends.

On Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 3, polls will open at 6:30 a.m. and will remain open until 7:30 p.m.

In class, we learned that people vote to choose leaders and decide about community rules or projects. My Uncle John said that when he goes to the polls for this election, he's taking me with him! I will get to watch him cast his vote!

So grown-ups, don't let voting be an inconvenience for you. The Cuyahoga County Board of Elections is open weekdays and some weekends. You can vote early in person, vote by mail with an absentee ballot or go to your polling place on Election Day. Early voting ends Nov. 1 at 5 p.m. and ordinary domestic absentee ballots must arrive by Nov. 3 at 7:30 p.m.

With some planning, Cleveland voters may even be able to arrange a free ride, call Antioch Baptist Church at 216-421-1516.

My uncle said that voting is a privilege, but he worries that if people fail to use their voting power, people may lose it. I sure hope they don't lose it before I get a chance to use it.

Little Miss Marva Bean is the precocious fourth-grade version of the managing editor, Marva White. She is committed to accurate editorial content with an emphasis on clear reporting, strong collaboration and coverage that informs and serves readers.

For the Ages

By Brittany Ervin

salted roads yet to be traveled
voices carried

the epitome of courage
anointed to adaptation
a sojourned path
yet a marathon

desires deferred
weathered storms
tested and tried

all the while
faith eternal
pause and think of that

eras defined
time-stamped transitions
like virtue
the oil of your spirit refined

many scores taken
covered by grace
your years not forsaken

navigating a new century
all the while
YOU carry history

living testimony
triumphant

VICTORY!

Baby, now what? Disparities in maternity care *From page 7*

heightened," Johnson said.

Supporting Black mothers extends beyond delivery. A comprehensive postpartum support plan developed before delivery should outline the physical, emotional and practical support the mother and family will need in the weeks and months after birth.

The Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale is a widely used screening questionnaire for symptoms of perinatal and postnatal depression. However, research examining translations of the scale in low- and lower-middle-income countries found that many had limitations in accurately identifying perinatal health concerns. These findings highlight the importance of language and cultural context could help when developing and administering mental health screening tools.

When these factors are not considered, screening questions may fail to capture how people express emotional distress, potentially overlooking symptoms or being identified for symptoms they do not have.

Johnson similarly cautions providers that perinatal mood and anxiety disorders can present differently across cultural contexts.

Drawing on her experience working with Black mothers, Johnson explains that emotional distress may not always be expressed in a way that providers expect. "I have Black mothers that won't necessarily say I'm feeling overwhelmed," said Johnson. "But they'll say things like I can't sit still. I feel like my brain's always running, running, running."

"These women are so deserving of that help and that care and that love and concern," said Johnson. "It is possible to not only survive but thrive. It doesn't have to be just survival."

Jennifer Bailey is a licensed clinical social worker and registered drama therapist.