

## HEI Annual Conference 2026 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

*This document was last updated on April 23, 2026, and will be updated as needed leading up to the start of the conference.*

### Important Dates

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| <b>Conference registration opens</b>  | Thursday, February 5, 2026<br>Note that HEI-funded investigators, committee members, and speakers will receive instructions from Robert Shavers and do not need to register through the website or book their hotel stay. |
| <b>Final deadline for the Jane Warren award and open abstract submissions for poster presentations on research not funded by HEI.</b> | The deadline for submissions was Friday, January 9, 2026  |
| <b>Registration closes</b>  | Registration will close if we reach capacity for the event. We will alert the HEI community via email, social media, and our <a href="#">annual conference webpage</a> when this happens.                                 |
| <b>Conference dates</b>   | The conference will take place in Chicago, Illinois from Sunday, April 26, 2026 – Tuesday, April 28, 2026.  |

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### Registration

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| <b>Is a one-day registration available?</b>              | Yes, you can register for the full 3-day conference or any of the individual days.   |
| <b>Can I register on-site at the event as a walk-in?</b> | We will offer on-site registration unless we reach capacity before the start of the conference. It is highly encouraged to register in advance.<br>Online registration will close 48 hours before the start of the conference. We will take walk-ins if capacity is still available. |

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### Travel & Accommodations

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| <b>Where is the conference?</b> | The conference will take place at <a href="#">The Westin Chicago River North (320 N Dearborn St, Chicago, IL 60654)</a> . |
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**How do I get to the conference?**

The hotel is located 16.2 miles from Chicago O'Hare International Airport ([ORD](#)) and 11.3 miles from Chicago Midway International Airport ([MDW](#)). Please see the airport websites for more detailed travel information.

- The hotel **does not** provide a shuttle service.
- The [CTA Blue Line](#) at O'Hare (ORD) offers 24/7 service directly to downtown Chicago (Forest Park-bound). It is located in the lower-level concourse of the Multi-Modal Facility, accessible from Terminals 1, 2, and 3. A one-way ticket from O'Hare is \$5.

Additional public transportation spots near the hotel include Bus stations

- [Union Station](#)
- [Clark Bus](#)
- [Grand Bus](#)

Subway station

- [Chicago Transit Authority Red Line](#)

Train station:

- [Chicago Union Station](#)

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**I am travelling internationally to attend the conference and have concerns about ongoing visa and immigration changes. What support can HEI offer?**

We understand any concern regarding travel into the United States right now and want to support all members of the HEI community to the best of our ability. We recommend you follow the guidance of your current institution regarding international travel advisories and procedures. For any registered conference attendee, we are happy to provide a letter confirming your registration for the HEI Annual Conference.

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**How do I arrange lodging at the conference venue?**

Conference attendees can reserve a room at the Westin Chicago River North when registering for the conference.

*Note that HEI-funded investigators, committee members, and speakers will receive instructions from Robert Shavers and do not need to book their hotel stay.*

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**Will there be free Wi-Fi?**

Yes, we will offer free Wi-Fi to conference participants in the main conference area.

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## Meals

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**What meals are provided for registered attendees?**

Conference participants who are registered for the full 3-day conference will receive the following meals:

- Sunday, April 26: Lunch & Dinner
- Monday, April 27: Breakfast & Lunch
- Tuesday, April 28: Breakfast & Lunch

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All meals will include vegetarian options. **If you have further questions about the food options, please contact the hotel directly.**

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## Accessibility

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**Is there an accessible entrance?** Please see the [Westin Chicago River North's homepage](#) for more information about accessibility at the hotel and conference venue.

More information is listed under "Accessibility Information" near the bottom of the page.

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**What is the conference space like? Will the conference be accessible by wheelchair?** The conference will take place in a single building, and elevators are available throughout the building. There will be a select number of seats reserved in the front and back of the main conference room for those with wheelchairs or other physical considerations.

We will update this once more information is available.

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**Will sign language interpretation or captioning be available?** Unfortunately, we will not be offering sign language interpretation or captioning of the sessions this year. However, after the conference ends, we will post the session recordings on our YouTube channel which will have the option for captions.

There will be seats reserved in the front of the main conference room for use by visual or hearing-impaired conference attendees.

We will always do our best to accommodate accessibility needs as they arise. Please reach out to Robert Shavers ([rshavers@healtheffects.org](mailto:rshavers@healtheffects.org)) with any specific concerns.

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**Can I bring my service animal?** Service animals are welcome at the Westin Chicago River North.

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**I am nursing. Will there be a designated space for this?** The Burnham Park room in the conference area will be available as a nursing room. Please see the conference registration desk for a key to access this space.

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**Health & Wellbeing** We recognize the associated health risks of large in-person gatherings, particularly to those with compromised immune systems. Please stay home and do not attend the conference if you are experiencing a fever, cough, muscle aches, or other illness-related symptoms prior to or during the conference. We ask everyone to do their part in keeping our community safe as we gather.

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Masks are not required but we support all attendees who choose to wear one.

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**Who can I contact at the venue regarding accessibility?**

We acknowledge that this FAQ does not offer a comprehensive list of accessibility needs. For further questions regarding the features of the accessible rooms, hotel common areas, or more specific information please call the hotel at +1 312-744-1900.

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## Other

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**Will conference sessions be livestreamed or recorded?**

The conference will be in-person only, meaning attendees will not be able to attend virtually via Zoom. We will share any conference materials that can be made available in the weeks following the conference.

View past conference sessions [here](#).

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**If I have additional questions, who can I contact?**

Logistics contact: Robert Shavers,  
[rshavers@healtheffects.org](mailto:rshavers@healtheffects.org)  
Conference program contact: Dan Crouse,  
[dcrouse@healtheffects.org](mailto:dcrouse@healtheffects.org)

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