

**Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH), Pennsylvania Cancer Coalition (PCC):  
Environmental Health Workgroup (EHWG)**

**7/16/24 Meeting #4**

Co-chairs: Dani Wilson & Fern Gilkerson

In attendance:

1. Fern Gilkerson
2. Ned Ketyer
3. Amy Whitaker
4. Jennifer King
5. Andre Green
6. Paula DiGregory

Meetings are held on the third Tuesdays of the month from 1:00pm-2:00pm. Any new and interested members referred to this workgroup must initially use the online form found on the [PCC website](#). They must also specifically request to join the [Environmental Health Workgroup](#). Click for the [PA Cancer Coalition website](#) and click for the [PA Cancer Control Plan](#).

[Past meeting notes can be found here.](#)

**Meeting Open**

Members in attendance confirmed they have access to the Google File.

All members are asked to consider which subcommittee you want to join and which demographic within the subcommittee you would like to commit to? The intention is to sort this out in the next couple of months, here are the subcommittees:

- Education (parents, health care professionals, employers, employees, professionals, general public)
- Policy (legislators, regulators)

**Action Plan**

Fern and Dani filled in the Action Plan prior to this meeting using a template provided by PADOH. Action Plan draft entries by Dani and Fern were based on past discussions, surveys, and agreements among members. Members in attendance at this meeting reviewed the current Action Plan draft, focusing on remaining questions Fern and Dani identified as necessary to document completion.

Members present reviewed various sections of the draft Action Plan. Highlighted below is the section on “organizations to engage achievement” where some updates were made to names

and locations. It was noted that any entity that joins this workgroup should be prepared to work within the Cancer Control Plan, and specifically within the EHWG plan for Cancer Control Plan EBIs. We need to establish who will reach out to each on the list below (some assignments are in place):

- [Cancer Free Economy](#) - National
- [Cancer Bridges](#) - Pittsburgh
- [Cancer Support Community](#)
- [Women for Healthy a Environment](#)
- [Environmental Health Project](#)

New organizations were added for engaging achievement during this meeting:

- [PA Coalition for Oral Health](#)
- [PA Alliance to Control Tobacco](#)
- [PA American Lung Association](#)
- [SW PA Water Network](#)
- [PA chapter American Academy of Pediatrics](#)

Updates were also made to the Action Plan list regarding which entities received the Cancer Control Plan. If there are others, please let us know:

1. CENSWPA (Pittsburgh)
2. Adagio Health System (Pittsburgh) including Tobacco Free Adagio Health (NW PA)
3. Plantbased Pittsburgh
4. Cancer Bridges (Pittsburgh)
5. University of Pittsburgh
6. Environmental Health Project (Pittsburgh)
7. GASP - Group Against Smog & Pollution (Pittsburgh)
8. Temple University - Harrisburg Campus and Philadelphia Main Campus + Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia
9. Penn Medicine - UPenn (Philadelphia)
10. Physicians for Social Responsibility Pennsylvania (statewide)
11. Tower Health (West Reading)
12. Department of Environmental Protection (statewide)
13. Nate Burden (radon group?)
14. Resa Jones (fox chase?)
15. Crawford Health Improvement Coalition (Crawford County, PA)
16. Delaware County Health Department (Delaware County, PA)

A 2025 in-person scientific summit was discussed but ideas were tabled for later discussion with the focus being on two separate audiences/clusters (this could mean 2 tracks or 2 summits - tbd). *Note:* The idea for the summit was originally proposed as one way the workgroup could address EBIs and the associated action steps to promote education and move the needle in other ways on the Action Plan. There could be a keynotes, breakouts, and sessions, with a final call to action. Initiatives and goals would be processed with participants as part of the summit.

Members in attendance at this meeting requested during the Action Plan review, under the Barriers section, to move legislators from the science-based audience #2 to the more public-based audience #1. Also, local officials were added to audience #1. The result of that discussion is below:

- #1: parents, public, employees and employers, educators, legislators, local officials
- #2: health care providers, scientists, and other allied professionals

The most recent EBIs arrangement is outlined below:

### **Education**

- Educate parents about cancer risks to children associated with environmental exposures and strategies to reduce risks (radon, secondhand smoke, exposure to household and other chemicals or pollutants)
- Educate the public by identifying and disseminating data sources and tools on environmental carcinogen exposure risks and safe alternatives
- Educate health care providers on importance of environmental, social determinants and cancer risk assessments on all patients and the availability of resources
- Educate Pennsylvanians about safe drinking water, potential water carcinogenic contaminants, well water testing, certified water testing laboratories and available resources
- Educate employees and employers about environmental occupational risks such as carcinogenic chemicals, secondhand smoke, and UV exposure in the workplace to develop policies and/or safer alternatives to decrease employee exposure
- Use data to educate the professional community about risks associated with exposure to tobacco, radon, air pollution, chemical and other environmental cancer risk factors

### **Education Action Steps to be completed:**

1. Collect data about risks associated with exposure to environmental exposures and strategies to reduce risks (ex. radon, secondhand smoke, drinking water, exposure to household and other chemicals or pollutants) and providing safe alternatives and resources for testing and products.
2. Develop and collect materials tailored to the parents, public and professionals (ex. an advocacy day at the capital, letter to representatives).
3. Engage with school districts and PTAs to provide materials, resources, and information.
4. Engage with PSR-PA, PA Medical Society, and providers to provide materials, resources, and information.

## Policy

- Advance partnerships to advocate for and support policies to increase environmental justice (EJ), promote health equity, and allocate funding to create safe neighborhoods and greenspace in underrepresented communities and current EJ areas
- Advance partnerships to support policy changes to close loopholes and exemptions in environmental protection laws (e.g., air and water quality, tobacco laws)
- Advance partnerships to explore and develop policies that incentivize the replacement of priority environmental carcinogens with safer alternatives
- Use data to educate the policy-making community about risks associated with exposure to tobacco, radon, air pollution, chemical and other environmental cancer risk factors

### **Policy Action Steps to be completed:**

1. Collect data about risks associated with exposure to tobacco, radon, air pollution [in partnership with the lung committee], chemical and other environmental cancer risk factors [EHWG].
2. Develop and collect materials to provide to legislators and regulators (ex. an advocacy day at the capital, letter to representatives).
3. Contact policy committee re: legislator and regulator contacts.

Data collection is our next step: *relevant carry over from the last meeting*: we discussed involving the Disparities Committee and a new member who specializes in biostatistics and epidemiology to assist this workgroup to compile data that is credible, scientifically accurate, sufficient, evidence-based, and tailored to the audience and related EBI(s).

## Meeting Close

The group was affirmed in our progress, in that we are taking careful steps to keep the workload manageable and tend to essential details up front at this point in time, rather than later when it may be more difficult to resolve.

**Next Meetings:** 3rd Tuesdays, 1pm – 2:00pm: Aug 20, Sep 17, Oct 15, Nov 19. We will meet monthly until the fall, then re-assess meeting frequency needs.

## Next Steps

Members are asked to consider and be prepared to discuss in the next meeting possible outcomes of the EBI's for the Action Plan.

All members are asked to consider which subcommittee you want to join and which demographic within the subcommittee you would like to commit to:

- Education (parents, health care professionals, employers, employees, professionals, general public)

- Policy (legislators, regulators)

We need members who will reach out to the new organizations to help us engage achievement.

EHWG will work with other PCC workgroups and allied agencies to disseminate information and partner with them on tasks. For example, PA Alliance to Control Tobacco and the American Lung Association.