

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

4/16/24 Meeting #2

Co-chairs: Dani Wilson & Fern Gilkerson

In attendance:

1. Fern Gilkerson
2. Dani Wilson
3. Andre Green
4. Sue Seppi
5. Amy Whitaker
6. Lisa Lorence
7. Aaron Makatura
8. Johnathan Whetstine
9. Paula di Gregory
10. Brenda Anastasio

Meeting Open

The meeting began with introductions and a nod to the PCC Environmental Health Resources Member Google folder and group email.

The action plan template was reviewed.

Workgroup members are encouraged to engage with trusted colleagues or associates who may be interested in joining the EHWG.

- New interested members must initially use the online form found on the [PCC website](#). They must also specifically request to join the [Environmental Health Workgroup](#). PADOH then notifies Dani and Fern regarding new member registration.

Polls Review

We reviewed the results of two polls shared (March 2024) with EHWG members to collect feedback on: 1) the best regular meeting date and time and 2) the prioritization of our pre-determined evidence-based interventions (EBIs) from the Cancer Control Plan.

- Meetings will be held on the third Tuesdays of the month from 1:00pm-2:00pm.
- EBIs prioritization is summarized below (12 respondents) followed by feedback from EHWG members present at the meeting. Suggestions/feedback in **bold**.

EBIs Review

The top five EBIs were prioritized by the March 2024 poll respondents in the following order:

- 1) 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 *[9 votes]*

- 2) 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) *[9 votes]*
- 3) Educate the public by identifying and disseminating data sources and tools on environmental carcinogen exposure risks and safe alternatives *[8 votes]*
- 4) Advance partnerships to support policy changes to close loopholes and exemptions in environmental protection laws (e.g., air and water quality, tobacco laws) *[7 votes]*
- 5) Educate health care providers on importance of environmental, social determinants and cancer risk assessments on all patients and the availability of resources *[7 votes]*

The remaining four EBIs were prioritized by the March 2024 poll respondents in the following order:

- 6) Advance partnerships to explore and develop policies that incentivize the replacement of priority environmental carcinogens with safer alternatives *[5 votes]*
- 7) Educate Pennsylvanians about safe drinking water, potential water carcinogenic contaminants, well water testing, certified water testing laboratories and available resources *[5 votes]*
- 8) Use data to educate the professional and policy-making community about risks associated with exposure to tobacco, radon, air pollution, chemical and other environmental cancer risk factors *[4 votes]*
 - **Collect information on occupational hazards and engage with policy makers and employers while guided by clear ideas about the population we are engaging with and what the message is for them.**
- 9) 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 *[3 votes]*
 - **Consider moving this up the list as a main priority. This conversation centered on firefighting as a (now nationally understood) hazardous profession regarding cancer rates. Also, it was discussed that private health insurance companies can cancel health insurance plans for volunteer firefighters and leave them to explore other options. Some of the EHWG members are currently dedicating effort to this issue.**

Consider condensing the original list of priorities into 3 priorities with subcategories. For example, priority categories could be: Policy; Education; Partnerships with the following subcategories: Advocacy & Action.

- **One way to condense the priorities could be to identify main points among the priorities with attention to how they cluster; then place these main points in the framework of policy, education, and partnerships to create a working outline of the deliverables.**

Meeting Close

It was recognized that the value-add of the EHWG to the PCC is two-fold:

- Environmental health risk reduction.
- Environmental health protective factors.

We explored the question of: What will decision-makers need to enact change? Responses were filtered into two categories:

- **Evidence-based resources**
- **Sufficient evidence**

Next Steps

EHWG will work to recruit appropriate and interested members.

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.

Dani and Fern will filter this group's feedback on the priorities and begin the process of re-organizing them.

- EHWG members should expect to come to an agreement on how the priorities are re-organized and decide upon 1 or 2 actionable items to launch efforts.

We will meet monthly until the fall, then re-assess meeting frequency needs.