

Detroit HealthLink for Equity in Cancer Care

Collaborating Partners: Community members, Voices of Detroit Initiative, Karmanos Cancer Institute/Wayne State University, Western Wayne Family Health Center/Inkster, ACCESS – Dearborn, and LGBT Detroit.

Project description/outcomes: Detroit HealthLink for Equity in Cancer Care is a region-wide coalition that addresses cancer related needs in the Metropolitan Detroit area. Under the umbrella of the Detroit HealthLink, several cancer action councils have been developed to empower cancer patients, caregivers, survivors and community members to address cancer issues in their communities through increased engagement in cancer research. To date, there are five cancer action councils: the Conner Creek/VODI Cancer Action Council, the Western Wayne Cancer Action Council, the Karmanos Cancer Institute/Midtown Cancer Action Council, the ACCESS-Dearborn Cancer Action Council, and the LGBT-Detroit Cancer Action Council. Because cancer affects all communities, it is vital to bring members of those communities into the research process. If community members and researchers work together, community-specific targeted research questions can be created.

Cancer Action Councils (CACs) are made up of community members and representatives from community-based organizations who share their knowledge and community experiences about local cancer issues to work together to identify possible ways to improve the lives of cancer patients, survivors and caregivers in their communities. Cancer action council members are actively engaged in their communities and are working to create healthier neighborhoods.

All of the councils have been or are being trained through the Building Your Capacity curriculum that consists of information covering an introduction to research, community engaged research, how to develop research questions, literature searches, research design, ethics and IRBs, qualitative and quantitative methods, grants and policy and advocacy. The councils also learned about cancer rates in their communities, the SEER Database/Epidemiology, and have been offered the opportunity to work with several researchers. The curriculum is designed to provide skills on how to partner with cancer researchers to develop projects, and set priorities for future cancer research and funding across the cancer continuum: prevention and early detection, diagnosis and treatment, survivorship and end of life.

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