

The Hub

The Hub Newsletter provides all things related to CCSN from network updates, to valuable resources, and events!



December 2025

WHO IS CCSN?

Ericka M. Sinclair, MS, MPH (she/her)

Founder/CEO, Health Connections, Inc.

Co-Founder, Milwaukee Black Grassroots Network for Health Equity

Co-Founder, The Milwaukee Wellness Collective

Board of Health Official, City of Milwaukee Health Department

Born and raised in the Milwaukee area, Ericka began her clinical operations journey by first earning a Bachelor's in Microbiology and African American Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, followed by a Master's in Clinical Laboratory Sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Both degrees supported her admiration for putting pieces of the puzzle together, such as understanding the nuances involved in interacting with health systems. During that time, Ericka was working closely with individuals who were living with HIV.

As time continued, Ericka transitioned into a role with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), working closely with infectious diseases. This relocation to Atlanta allowed her to pursue her Master's in International Public Health at Emory University. Ericka saw public health as the avenue to connect people and science. After ten years in Atlanta, Ericka returned to Milwaukee to direct the HIV Program for the Milwaukee Health Department and hold senior management positions at Aurora Health Care and Milwaukee Health Services.



Her most recent adventure involves her position as the Founder and CEO for [Health Connections, Inc. \(HCI\)](#), located in Glendale, Wisconsin. Ericka started HCI when she saw a need in the community. She wanted to **“connect the dots to help people navigate health systems—especially those for whom this knowledge isn’t common—and translate complex health information into something understandable and relatable.”** By leading HCI, she partners with local organizations and health systems to cultivate conversations that people can have with their families. These conversations help reduce the stigma of discussing family health ailments, thereby making everyone more informed about various health risks. HCI helps fill gaps in traditional healthcare delivery. HCI **“impacts folks by doing it differently to get different results,”** specifically by providing comprehensive care to some of Milwaukee’s most vulnerable populations. Additionally, Ericka focuses on training providers to practice empathy. **“It’s imperative to treat people as if they were relatives or those just starting their health journey. This helps customize care to the individual and not to a checklist.”** Partnerships have helped things flourish at HCI. Ericka emphasized that **“true success requires collaboration; no institution can achieve it in isolation.”**

A prime example of partnership involves the [Slam Dunk Screenings Health Fair and Charity Basketball Game Supporting Colorectal & Prostate Cancer](#). The event occurs every March, in support of March Madness, and helps raise awareness of colorectal and prostate cancer, encouraging people to complete screenings to assess their health status and cancer risk. See more details in the [Upcoming Events](#) section (page 4).

Ericka's bond with CCSN began through two heartfelt family connections: her paternal uncle, Pastor Bobby Sinclair, once faced prostate cancer and, during that time, connected with Dr. Melinda Stolley and the Men Moving Forward study, as well as Ericka's maternal cousin, Ambrose Wilson-Brown, who is also part of the CCSN community. Though Pastor Sinclair ultimately passed from other causes, his journey helped weave Ericka's family into CCSN through an introduction to Melinda. The connection was expanded when Ambrose invited Ericka to initially join the Understanding Prostate Cancer Disparities group and is now part of the Prostate Health Equity Project. Ericka shared that she values how CCSN cultivates a space for emerging perspectives and lived experiences to come to light during rich discussions. **"I think it is so important to give people a moment to process and digest everything; I am so glad we do this in our CCSN teams!"** Those discussions pinpoint the intersection of social and clinical realms, **"In CCSN, we have a team of people looking at a particular condition that's connected to social status and healthcare, and how it is connected to cancer screening and testing."**

Ericka shared that she recharges by plugging in her earbuds to shift the atmosphere with music, going for a walk near Lake Michigan, and travelling internationally with friends and believes in the importance of spending quality time with her son, friends, and family. Thank you for all of your efforts, Ericka!

SAVE THE DATE!
Health Connections, Inc.,
Intergenerational Health Fair and
Charity Basketball Game on **March 14, 2026**, at Milwaukee Lutheran High School

NETWORK UPDATES

More Mobility-Friendly Raised Beds!

On Thursday, November 6th, Michael Gonzalez, Collaborative Work Groups Program Coordinator, visited the Greater Lakes Inter-Tribal Council (GLITC) project to help expand the program's reach. Amy Poupart, GLITC NARCH Program Director, and Emmy Mitchell, GLITC Greenhouse Program Coordinator, identified a need in the community: members with mobility issues have trouble using ground-level garden beds. Michael joined Emmy in building raised garden beds so that the garden would be accessible to more people.

Emmy and Amy believe all community members should have access to fresh produce and the ability to grow their own food, whether in ground-level or raised garden beds. Located along the sidewalk, the raised beds create a more inclusive experience where folks don't have to bend over or down to use them. Chairs and rolling seats are also available for anyone who needs them.

If you are interested in joining GLITC's community garden next year or using one of the spaces, please go to their [website](#) and click "Reserve a Plot."

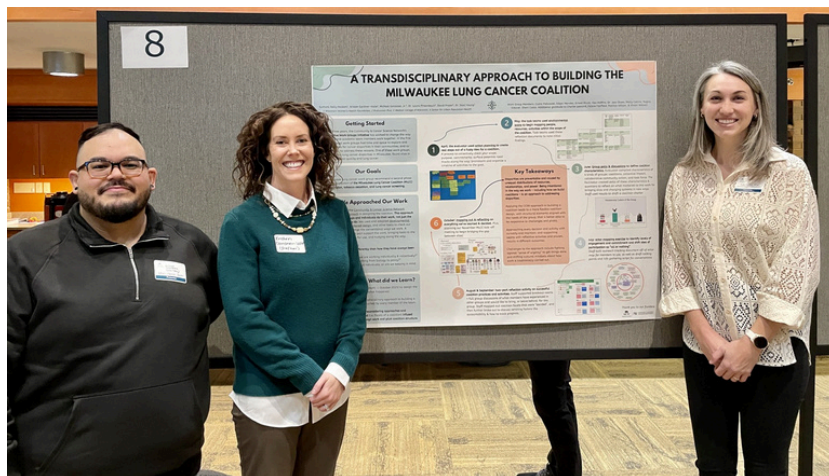


Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, Inc.
Lac du Flambeau, Wisconsin

NETWORK UPDATES

Collaborative Work Group Members Presenting at MCW's Community Engagement Poster Session

On Thursday, November 14th, Collaborative Work Group (CWG) members presented progress made thus far on two CWG projects. The first was the Milwaukee Lung Cancer CWG, which shared the importance of *A Transdisciplinary Approach to Building the Milwaukee Cancer Coalition*. The poster illustrated the importance of leveraging community assets to address the risk of lung cancer collectively. In particular, the CWG created the Milwaukee Lung Cancer Coalition (MLCC) to bridge the silos of radon, tobacco cessation, and lung cancer screening. During the creation phase, the MLCC focused on testing assumptions and challenging conventional ways of working together to drive systems change. Development continues by learning about and mapping systems in each area.



Michael Gonzalez, Jr. (MCW), Kristen Gardner-Volle (Evaluation Plus), Kelly Hackett (Wisconsin Women's Health Foundation)



Next, the Milwaukee & Racine Breast Cancer CWG presented on *The Importance of Feedback Loops in Health Promotion Materials*. The feedback loop has five key steps: Design, Collect, Interpret, Respond, and Close the Loop.



Jada Proctor (Center for Urban Population Health), Deb Foley (CWG member), Phyllis Holder (CWG member), Minerva Cornejo (CWG member), Lisa Brooks (Progressive Health Centers), Jessie Barrera (Progressive Health Centers), Michael Gonzalez, Jr. (MCW), Kailey Taebel (Center for Urban Population Health)

Key moments in the feedback loop involved the design, which began with a student collaboration at the Zilber College of Public Health. During that time, the students referenced the literature and current health promotion resources, which then segued into a root cause analysis to identify contributors to breast cancer disparities. A key component of the process involved a roundtable event that invited CWG members to provide feedback on the new breast health promotion materials the students created. While completing the feedback loop, the students and CWG members identified the need for accessible language to reduce fear and confusion, the inclusion of culturally relevant imagery, and tailored content for local contexts. Further, the students gained a better understanding of their own risk for breast cancer!

NETWORK UPDATES

Mammography Quality Initiative: Reengaging the Regional Learning Collaborative

The Mammography Quality Initiative (MQI) continues to work towards their vision of high-quality breast health that is inclusive of identity, lived experience, and that addresses the particular barriers that people face in Wisconsin. As they continue to break down silos and bridge gaps, they know they need to strengthen their relationships and engage as many perspectives as possible from throughout the mammography system.

This past fall, they focused on reengaging their Regional Learning Collaborative members (RLC). The RLC is focused on southeast Wisconsin and is comprised of radiologists, techs, patient navigators, survivors and community-based organizations who represent their most impacted communities. Jessica Palmert, the Quality and Learning Facilitator, has conducted one-on-one conversations with members of the team who were previously engaged. She also reached out to potential new leaders to gauge their interest in joining the initiative. Jessica asked each leader about their work background, how they became involved in breast health, their understanding of where the project is currently, and what they hope to achieve with the last 18 months. The RLC will reconvene for an in person gathering in January 2026 where we will work collectively to expand the definition of quality mammography in Wisconsin.



Community & Cancer Science Network



If you are interested in learning more about the MQI Regional Learning Collaborative, please reach out to Jessica at: jpalmert@wwhf.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

Save the Date: Slam Dunk Screenings

As part of their community outreach efforts, Health Connections, Inc., (HCI) is hosting a Colorectal Cancer Awareness Health Fair & Charity Basketball Game!

Check out the video [here](#) to get a glimpse of all the great things that happened last year.

DATE

Saturday, March 14, 2026

LOCATION

Milwaukee Lutheran High School
9700 W Grantosa Dr, Milwaukee, WI 53222



UPCOMING EVENTS



DST-HCI ACS VOICES OF BLACK WOMEN

LISTENING LOUNGE

LAUNCH EVENT

TUESDAY DECEMBER 9, 2025

5PM – 7PM

THRIVEON KING

2153 N DR. MLK JR. DRIVE
MILWAUKEE WI 53212

**OUR VOICES
OUR POWER.**

JOIN US FOR THE FIRST DST-HCI ACS VOICES LISTENING LOUNGE — AN EVENING OF SISTERHOOD, STORYTELLING, AND SELF CARE.

**SCAN
ME**



TO REGISTER FOR THIS EVENT, PLEASE SCAN THE QR CODE OR VISIT: [BIT.LY/4NE6XOC](https://bit.ly/4NE6XOC)

CALL HEALTH CONNECTIONS, INC AT 414-999-1099 TO REGISTER OR SIGN UP.

POWERED BY MILWAUKEE ALUMNAE CHAPTER DELTA SIGMA THETA SORORITY, INC., HEALTH CONNECTIONS, INC. & THE AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY VOICES OF BLACK WOMEN STUDY.



CANCER AWARENESS

Read Now: Wisconsin Cancer Collaborative Issue Brief About Radon in Wisconsin

Do you know about radon and the link to lung cancer?

“Radon is a colorless, odorless, radioactive gas that comes from the natural breakdown of uranium in soil, rock, and water. During the process, the soil beneath and around a home or other building can be the source for radon into the indoor air, mainly via entry through cracks and spaces in the basement and foundation.”

Learn more about *Radon in Wisconsin: Testing, Mitigation, and the Link to Lung Cancer* [here](#).

Kudos to Allison Antoine and other members from the Wisconsin Cancer Collaborative and Wisconsin Department of Health Services Radon Program for creating this informative issue brief!

Issue Brief Wisconsin Cancer Collaborative
REDUCING THE BURDEN TOGETHER

Radon in Wisconsin: Testing, Mitigation, and the Link to Lung Cancer

Allison Antoine, MPH, CHES,¹ Kim Dawson, MPH,² Amanda Koch, MPH,² Katie Lepak, MS,¹ and Olivia Steidl, MPH¹

¹Wisconsin Cancer Collaborative and ²Wisconsin Department of Health Services Radon Program

Introduction
Radon is a colorless, odorless, radioactive gas that comes from the natural breakdown of uranium in soil, rock, and water.¹ During this process, the soil beneath and around a home or other building can be the source for radon intrusion into the indoor air, mainly via entry through cracks and spaces in the basement and foundation.¹ As uranium is naturally broken down, radon can also be found in groundwater, although the risk of exposure via groundwater in Wisconsin is generally much less than radon gas in indoor air. As a natural component of the Earth's crust and atmosphere, radon is found all over Wisconsin and the world.

Radon's Link to Lung Cancer
As radon decays, it breaks down into radioactive particles that can be inhaled. Once these particles enter your lungs, they can further damage the DNA in lung epithelial cells. Prolonged exposure to these DNA-damaging particles may lead to lung cancer. The association between radon exposure and lung cancer has been demonstrated throughout the literature in numerous cohort studies of miners over many decades, dating back to the 1960s.²

Key Takeaways

- Radon exposure is the leading cause of lung cancer among people who have never smoked and the second leading cause for people who have a history of smoking.
- There are opportunities to support improved radon testing, mitigation, and quality data collection to reduce exposure and decrease lung cancer risk.
- While there are radon protections in early child care settings, there is an opportunity for continued protection for students in K-12 schools to ensure that all students have limited radon exposure in their learning environments.

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas. It can enter your home through the ground and affect indoor air quality. When inhaled, the radioactive particles can damage DNA and cause lung cancer. The only way to know if your home has high levels of radon is to test. Test. Fix. Save a life. Learn more at [epa.gov/radon](#). EPA Radon Information (EPA, 2021)

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Lung Cancer in Wisconsin

Did you know that lung cancer is the second most common cancer among men and women in the US (not including skin cancer)?

“This report provides an overview of Wisconsin’s lung cancer landscape, focusing on incidence and mortality, as well as survival outcomes for small cell lung cancer and non-small cell lung cancer combined (Table 1). It also offers insights into how lung cancer affects different populations in Wisconsin, highlights important risk factors, and underscores the importance of timely diagnosis and treatment. Understanding these data are critical to implementing effective public health strategies and improving outcomes for those affected by lung cancer.”

Learn more about *Lung Cancer in Wisconsin, A Report by the Wisconsin Cancer Collaborative* [here](#).

LUNG CANCER IN WISCONSIN
A REPORT BY THE WISCONSIN CANCER COLLABORATIVE

Fall 2024

Wisconsin Cancer Collaborative