

CANCER AND ENVIRONMENTAL RISK FACTORS IN IOWA

A Bold New Conversation About Cancer

Cancer impacts all of us. Whether it's a personal experience, a family member, or a friend, Iowa's high cancer rates mean that we've all seen the pain and devastation a cancer diagnosis can cause. While we know some of the causes – alcohol and tobacco use, exposure to UV light or tanning beds – other potential causes for Iowa's outlier status don't get as much attention.

There is rarely a circumstance where an incidence of cancer – or even a population experiencing an overall increase in cancer – can be tied to just one thing. Cancer almost always is related to a number of factors in combination. Folks in the health world say it is “multifactorial.”

A new project from The Harkin Institute and the Iowa Environmental Council is exploring the environmental risk factors of Iowa's crisis. Throughout the project, we are partnering with experts and everyday Iowans whose lives have been impacted by cancer to bring to light what is missing in the puzzle of cancer factors in our state.

Where We Will Begin

- A Harkin Institute fellow at Drake University will conduct an academic literature and research review to summarize and describe what is known about environmental pollution exposure and cancer risk.
- The Iowa Environmental Council, Harkin Institute, and partners will conduct listening sessions in 15 communities across Iowa that are being impacted by cancer and environmental pollution.
- The literature review will be submitted for publication and become the basis for a report and statewide campaign about environmental cancer risks. This campaign will allow Iowans to tell their stories about how cancer has impacted their lives, families, and economic well-being.

What We Will Achieve

- Iowans deserve to be informed about environmental risk factors. Through partnerships with health-focused organizations, the media, and broad public outreach, we will help increase access to critical information that can save lives.
- Cancer prevention in Iowa has been severely under-resourced. With this project, we will use a research-based approach that asks Iowans about their needs so we can share their stories and improve the outlook for people across the state.



Iowa has the **second-highest** cancer rate in the U.S.



Iowa is one of **only two states** where cancer is **increasing**

Our goal is to bring people together around policies that will reduce environmental contamination as a factor in cancers in Iowa.

Learn more, share your story, or RSVP for a listening session near you:

