

NETWORK
CONNECT

MEDIA KIT



THE NETWORK CONNECT STORY

As its motto suggests, “We Are the Network Connecting Communities,” Network Connect is a nonprofit that takes a community connection, resource building and information awareness approach to youth and family development with community at its center.

What makes Network Connect unique is the people behind the organization. Network Connect’s leadership and staff look like the community they serve, have social capital, and train to provide 21st-century case management while also having the necessary experience with vulnerable populations to contribute to the organization's success.

Most importantly, serving youth and their families is the Executive Director's passion and commitment. Cierra sees this work as a way to give back to the community that raised her.

Network Connect promotes youth and family development through seven key programs: Community Well-being Ambassadors, Dual School, Future Culture Creators, Reverse the ACES, Wilmington Street Team, Safe Passage and Messaging Center.

Mission & Vision

Network Connect builds community capacity by coordinating grassroots and local partners to provide youth and families with social services, education programs, workforce skills, and mental health support.



CIERRA HALL-HIPKINS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Founder Facts

Cierra Hall-Hipkins is a shining example of how a single individual can positively impact their community. Possessing a strong commitment to improving the lives of those around her, Cierra has dedicated her career to helping others.

Cierra has a bachelor's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from University of Maryland Eastern Shore and a wealth of experience in leadership positions. She has over 10 years of experience in leadership positions at multiple non-profit organizations.

In 2019, Cierra co-founded Network Connect, where she currently serves as the Executive Director. Cierra is also a Board Member for the Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence and has successfully spearheaded initiatives to expand organizations' reach. Her commitment to improving the well-being of others was recognized in 2022 by Technically Delaware, who named her the Culture Builder of the Year.

Company Facts

- Network Connect was officially incorporated in April of 2019.
- In June 2019, Network Connect kicked off Safe Haven services for 75 youth in Delaware.
- In October 2020, Network Connect celebrated the Grand Opening of its first office space. The space has been pivotal in providing a safe environment for programs.
- Network Connect has 7 essential programs which they continue to expand year over year. These programs help provide livable wages to 50-plus adults.

Awards

- Emerging Champions Award from the Office of the Governor 2022
- Declaration from the Wilmington City Council 2021 National Mentoring Month

**ABOUT
NETWORK
CONNECT**

CURRENT PROGRAMS

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Dual School

Dual School is a 12-week program that utilizes social impact projects to empower youth to become changemakers. In cohorts, students participate in design thinking workshops and mentorship opportunities to deeply understand a problem, and create and launch meaningful solutions. The latest Dual School programming includes the Healthcare Hub in partnership with ChristianaCare, which focuses on healthcare career training, and a Design Thinking workshop with the YMCA.



The Future Culture Creator Employment Program provides youth ages 14-19, currently enrolled in school, with enriching, constructive year-round training, employment, and internships through subsidized placement with local creatives, community-based organizations, and non-profit organizations. Each cohort of FCC youth completes 12 weeks of training on workforce development, trauma-informed care, design thinking, financial literacy, and community engagement training, followed by job placement. Students who complete the program are placed in employment opportunities with local employers, a FCC staff member advises the student for an additional 90 days to ensure they maintain employment.

Key facts about Future Culture Creators:

- Network Connect has employed 107 FCC youth since the program launched in 2019.

CURRENT PROGRAMS



RACE to Wellness Campaign: Mental Health and ACES Awareness Program

The RACE programs put into practice the CDC's six strategies to prevent Adverse Childhood Experiences: strengthen economic support for families, promote social norms that protect against violence and adversity, ensure a strong start for children, teach skills, connect youth to caring adults and activities, and intervene to lessen immediate and long-term harms. There are 5 RACE Programs:

- Network Connect delivers RACE kits, mental wellness packages, to youth and families across the state.
- RACE Camp is a year-round program that connects elementary and middle school students to recreational, cultural, and creative activities to strengthen learning.
- RACE After-School Programming provides students with an enriching and supportive environment after school hours.
- RACE Days are events hosted around the state in partnership with community-based organizations. Events typically feature the distribution of RACE kits or other essential resources for the community like clothing or food
- Safe Passage launched the 2022 school year in partnership with the Community Educating Building. Safe Passage Ambassadors are responsible for monitoring and ensuring the safe passage of children to and from school. The Safe Passage Ambassador is also responsible for maintaining positive and strong community relationships. Safe Passage workers are employed by Network Connect in partnership with the school communities that they serve.

The Community Well-Being Ambassador (CWA) Initiative is a community-driven, place-based prevention strategy to increase the capacity of targeted neighborhoods in the City of Wilmington by promoting community well-being and resiliency among their residents across the lifespan. CWAs provide mental health, substance abuse, positive activities, youth support, and essential need solutions.

Key facts about Community Well-being Ambassadors:

- Since 2021 CWA Ambassadors have served 1869 people in both cities, connecting them to necessary health support and resources.
- CWAs distributed 3889 Narcan kits and trained 1876 community members in Narcan delivery



CURRENT PROGRAMS



Wilmington Street Team

Wilmington Street Team: Violence Prevention Program

In response to a landscape analysis conducted by the Community Based Public Safety Collective, the City of Wilmington established the Wilmington Community Public Safety Initiative led by Dr. Debra Mason. This initiative's implementation team, The Wilmington Street Team, is made up of three organizations: Network Connect, Youth Advocate Program, and Center for Structural Equity. This group is tasked with monitoring and responding to community violence by providing intervention services and connections to resources.vv

UW GUIDES: School-Based Community Advocates

Together, Network Connect and United Way partner to implement the United Way GUIDES project. GUIDES work with students and families to help maximize access to critical education options (i.e. school choice), programs (i.e. Delaware Pathways selection) and resources (i.e. education and career offerings). Embedding GUIDES--dedicated adults from local communities --within selected middle schools to mentor youth will help close the opportunity gap by providing culturally relevant and equitable access to out-of-school, after-school, and summer programs.



The Message Center

The Messaging Center supported by Highmark, launched in September of 2023 and currently serves New Castle, Kent, and Sussex Counties. The Messaging Center provides important Medicaid re-enrollment information to families and communities in these 3 service areas. The Highmark supported project is focused on informing the community of the need to re-enroll and update their information for Medicaid.

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