

National Black Church Initiative

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For immediate release
PRESS RELEASE

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NATIONAL BLACK CHURCH INITIATIVE DECLARES HEALTH EMERGENCY ON H1N1 IN THE BLACK CHURCH

*African American health leaders join the Black Church in news
conference*

Washington, DC – In light of President Obama's Health Emergency Order on H1N1 the National Black Church Initiative (NBCI), with 34,000 churches around the country representing 13 Black religious denominations, is declaring a national health emergency on H1N1 in the Black Church. This health emergency falls within NBCI's Health Emergency Declaration, which is a seven-year project to close the health disparity gap in the African American community. This emergency means that the Black Church will coordinate with health officials at the federal, state and local levels to make sure that every African American in the country is vaccinated against the H1N1 flu virus. The reason for this move is to not allow African Americans to once again become the overwhelming victim of another disease, especially one that can be as deadly as H1N1.

The press conference will be held on Wednesday, Nov. 11, 2009 at 10:30 a.m. at Saint Stephen's Baptist Church, 5757 Temple Hills Road, Temple Hills, Maryland 20748. Attending the press conference will be: African American religious leadership, National Black Church Initiative; National Medical Association; Center for Disease Control; Office of the Surgeon General; Blacks in Government; National Black Nurses Association; Association of Black Cardiologists; National Institute of Health; National Dental Association; Howard University Hospital; National Organization of Black County Officials; NAACP; Black Leadership Forum, Inc.; Rainbow Push; Congressional Black Caucus.

NBCI understands the seriousness of the H1N1 crisis, and we, as members of the clergy, are calling on all families in America, especially minority families, to get vaccinated once the vaccine is available. NBCI wants the public to understand that this is a pandemic, and is not business as usual. We cannot, as responsible clergy, allow the public to consider this as another regular flu season, and ignore the warnings about the importance of being vaccinated against H1N1. According to the best information available the vaccine is safe for all ages. This is why

we are urging the American public to get vaccinated and protect themselves, their families, their neighbors and their communities.

Rev. Anthony Evans, President of NBCI, said, “This is the proper role of the Black Church: to make sure that it uses its vast influence to promote and work with African American physicians in dealing with this crisis. It is important that the church uses its moral authority to make sure that accurate information concerning the flu is disseminated properly in and outside of its faith communities. It is also important that the church be seen as a key stakeholder in advocating the need for everyone to be vaccinated against H1N1 in order to sustain the Black Church and help to continue to build a civil society.”

The church is at its best when it uses its moral authority during a period of crisis, and despite not wanting to alarm anyone, this is a time of crisis and the church must speak. NBCI believes that people should get their entire family vaccinated and not forget to immunize against other diseases as well. This is a pandemic and it only comes once in a lifetime and must be taken very seriously. Here is the basic information that everyone needs to know concerning the H1N1 vaccine as cited by the CDC:

When to Get Vaccinated

Vaccination against 2009 H1N1 should begin as soon as vaccine is available and continue throughout the influenza season, into December, January, and beyond. This is because the timing and duration of flu activity can vary. Flu seasons can last as late as April or May. By early October 2009, extensive 2009 H1N1 flu activity was being reported in the United States. It’s possible that there may be waves of 2009 H1N1 activity during the 2009-2010 flu season that hit communities more than once over the course of the season. While 2009 H1N1 viruses are likely to be the most common cause of influenza this season, CDC still expects that seasonal influenza viruses will circulate and continues to recommend that people get a seasonal flu vaccine to protect against seasonal flu viruses.

The [ACIP has issued separate recommendations on who should get the 2009-10 seasonal vaccines](#).

Who Should Get Vaccinated

CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), a panel made up of medical and public health experts, met July 29, 2009, to make recommendations on who should receive the 2009 H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available. While the federal government has purchased enough vaccine so that anyone who wants to get vaccinated can, ACIP’s statement on the “[Use of Influenza A \(H1N1\) 2009 Monovalent Vaccine](#)” recommends that vaccination efforts should focus first on people in five target groups who are at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 influenza or related complications, are likely to come in contact with influenza viruses as part of their occupation and could transmit influenza viruses to others in medical care settings, or are close contacts of infants younger than 6 months (who are too young to be vaccinated). These five target groups make up an estimated 159 million people in the United States.

Vaccine Effectiveness

The ability of a flu vaccine to protect a person depends on the age and health status of the person getting the vaccine, and the similarity or "match" between the viruses or virus in the vaccine and those in circulation. CDC analyzes circulating influenza viruses on an ongoing basis to determine how closely matched they are to vaccine viruses and publishes the information weekly in [FluView](#). In addition, every year CDC monitors vaccine effectiveness. For more information about flu vaccine effectiveness, see [How Well Does the Seasonal Vaccine Work?](#)

Rev. Mark McCleary, Chair of NBCI Minister Alliance, said, "It is imperative that every family in America get vaccinated from the H1N1 flu virus. This is extremely important and it cannot be overlooked or ignored. This is why we are using the full force of the church to urge compliance. After this has passed our community, I must urge every family to evaluate their immunization status and to vigorously update any vaccinations they may need. A family that has the proper immunizations is a family that is on the road to a healthy existence. This push for immunization is a part of the National Black Church Initiative's Health Emergency Declaration (HED), where the church will utilize its moral authority over the next seven years in order to help families stay healthy."

About NBCI

The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI), a coalition of 16,000 African-American and Latino member churches works to eradicate racial disparities in healthcare. In addition to our member churches, we have 18,000 sister churches. NBCI is a faith-based health organization dedicated to providing critical wellness information and preventive health screening to all of its members. The African-American community ranks first in eleven different health risk categories. NBCI's purpose is to partner with national health officials to provide health education, reduce racial health disparities, and increase access to quality healthcare.