

National Black Church Initiative

Current COVID-19 Strategies and Activities

The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI) is currently implementing critical portions of our Comprehensive Engagement Plan as we prepare the African American community to receive the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccines. Features of this Plan include education, outreach, the National Flu Campaign (NFC), a Mask Campaign, and a Media Campaign aimed to enhance any state-wide COVID-19 vaccination plans that are submitted to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

Education

NBCI's educational campaign launched in October of 2020 and began with a message from the organization's lead pastors on the importance of all members receiving their flu shots this season. The campaign targets African American and Latino families with an emphasis on African American children, pregnant women, the disabled, the homeless, and African American and Latino men 60 years or older, and outlines how to access the flu vaccine through primary care physicians, CVS, or alternative health plans.

The NBCI is adamant about educating its members on the flu virus and advocating for the flu vaccine as the first line of defense against COVID-19. One of the NBCI's flu education sessions is a lecture by infectious disease expert Dr. Daniel Kuritzkes. The lecture includes a discussion on the history of influenza, how the flu virus affects the body, flu symptoms, flu complications, how flu spreads, and how to keep from getting infected. The NBCI has posted Dr. Kuritzkes' presentation on its website.

All 150,000 churches that are part of the NBCI's coalition are working with state and local health departments and taking responsibility for ensuring that each member of their community receives a flu shot.

Outreach

The NBCI is uniquely positioned to carry out this plan because of the size of its organization and its experience creating health plans in the past. Its 150,000 member churches represent 37 major Black Protestant denominations in the country with a total membership of 27.7 million African Americans.

The NBCI was founded in 1992 to combat disparities in the U.S. healthcare system that affect African Americans. Its original health model is called the Health Emergency Declaration (HED). Written 25 years ago, the HED was integrated into the normal flow of church activities, plans, and culture, and public health experts have called it the most innovative, flexible, and effective health model ever created for the Black community.

The HED's three main elements are:

1) Designating at least one member of the church other than the pastor as the church's Congregational Health Corps Volunteer. This person spearheads all NBCI health initiatives within the congregation, organizing volunteers and coordinating logistics.

2) The NBCI identifies members of its churches who are healthcare professionals or representatives of the pharmaceutical industry. These people are responsible for providing accurate medical and scientific information to the members of their church and helping people access healthcare that suits their needs instead of going to the emergency room. For example, if a member of the church has a chronic health problem (such as obesity, heart disease, diabetes, or cancer), and has trouble establishing a medical home for themselves within their community that includes a doctor who knows them and their health problems personally, their Health Corps volunteer can help them set up good primary care and develop a treatment plan for their condition.

3) Health Corps Volunteers become their congregation's health educators when the NBCI raises awareness about a disease that impacts the African American community disproportionately, like multiple myeloma. The volunteers explain the problem in language that people who don't have a high school education can understand. They also educate their congregations on the value of African Americans participating in clinical trials so the scientific community has accurate information on how African Americans respond to new medications and treatments.

Social Media and Messaging

The NBCI has contracted with two African American doctors, Dr. Yolandra Hancock and Dr. Geoffrey Mount Varner, who have agreed to be our spokespeople. These physicians will be responsible for the messaging of our flu campaign. We will also use the NBCI's Literature Review Committee, headed by Dr. Rosusan Barteo, to craft effective messages that will motivate people to get flu shots this winter. The Literature Review Committee consists of three African American Ph.Ds. who specialize in health literacy, plus an interdisciplinary literature team.

We plan to utilize all social media platforms as well as recruit local artists and utilize our church-based music talent to send very clear messages on the importance of getting vaccinated against the flu this year. The National Black Religious Broadcasters (NBRB), which has 10,000 members, will work closely with the NBCI to make sure that our messages reach all our vulnerable populations.

Each of the member service websites has agreed to carry contact information on the importance of flu shots and where you can get them based upon your zip code. We plan to reach out to 274 Black newspaper associations, 180 Black urban radio stations, and the 10 Black-oriented cable TV stations as well as local stations in the 47 cities in which this initiative will launch. The NBCI will receive a discount from the media entities cited because we have longstanding relationships with them.

Coalition

We will include 25,000 Latino churches, and 10,000 rural white churches in this extraordinary public health project for a total of more than 180,000 participating churches. We will incorporate whatever technology assistance and resources the CDC and local state health departments can contribute to this campaign.

The CVS pharmacy will be our leading partner. They plan to administer flu shots at over 8,000 of their stores. We will solicit support from all of our pharmacy partners to bring critical information and supplies to this campaign. We will announce the individual companies who will join the campaign in the coming weeks.

We have worked successfully with the National Association of Community Health Clinics on different projects throughout the past 10 years, and will work with them on this one as well. We will use the NBCI's Demographic Zip Code System to connect all 10,000 of their health clinics around the country with our churches. The National Association of Community Clinics has received grants from the White House COVID-19 Task Force and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Administration of the Flu Vaccine

We will encourage our members to get flu shots at five locations: our churches, CVS, primary care doctors, urgent care centers, and the clinics of the National Association of Community Health Centers.

Participating cities include:

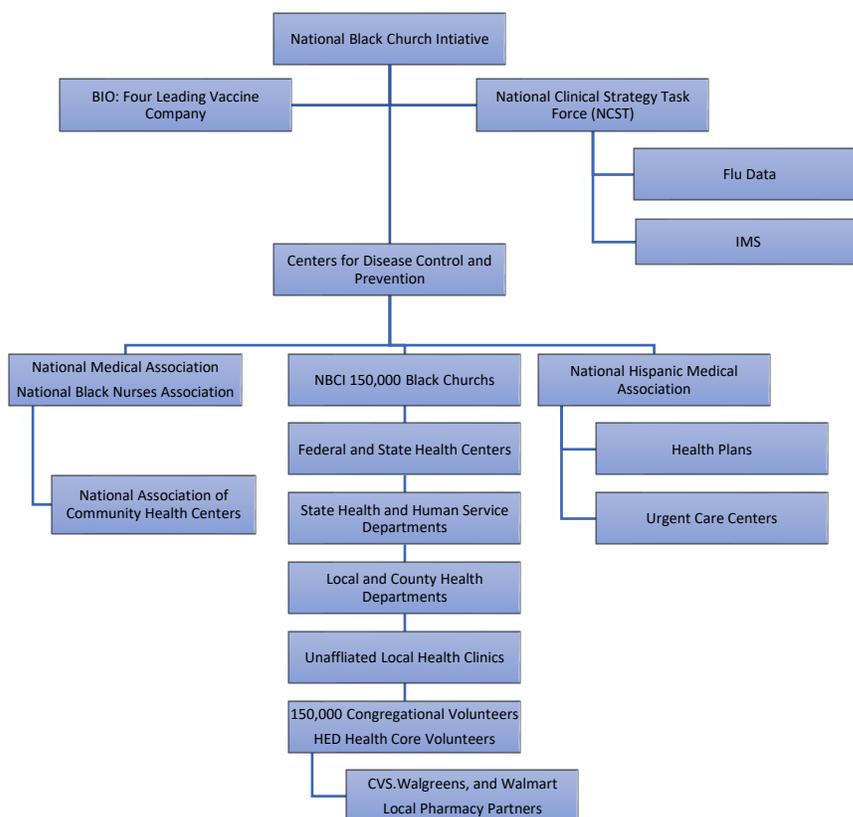
1. Atlanta, GA
2. Chicago, IL
3. Washington, D.C.
4. Philadelphia, PA
5. Miami, FL
6. Houston, TX
7. Detroit, MI
8. Dallas, TX
9. Los Angeles, CA
10. Baltimore, MD
11. Memphis, TN
12. Norfolk, VA
13. St. Louis, MO
14. San Francisco, CA
15. Charlotte, NC
16. Cleveland, OH
17. New Orleans, LA
18. Richmond, VA
19. Orlando, FL
20. Boston, MA
21. Tampa, FL
22. Riverside, CA

23. Birmingham, AL
24. Jacksonville, FL
25. Baton Rouge, LA
26. Columbus, OH
27. Indianapolis, IA
28. Milwaukee, WI
29. Jackson, MS
30. Cincinnati, OH
31. Columbia, SC
32. Minneapolis, MN
33. Nashville, TN
34. Raleigh, NC
35. Las Vegas, NV
36. Pittsburgh, PA
37. Augusta, GA
38. San Antonio, TX
39. Seattle, WA
40. Greensboro, NC
41. Charleston, SC
42. Louisville, KY
43. Montgomery, AL
44. Little Rock, AR
45. Savannah, GA
46. Shreveport, LA

Below is a diagram of how the NBCI will collaborate with other organizations to implement its flu plan.

NBCI National Flu Campaign Flow Chart

Education, Outreach and Vaccination



National Black Church Initiative Mask Proposal

The NBCI has launched a \$6 million nationwide campaign to purchase three million masks for poor, disadvantaged, and vulnerable populations to protect them from COVID-19. We ask everyone to give immediately so that the church can do this job.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has stated that you can get COVID-19 from contact with people who are apparently healthy, which is why it is important for everyone to wear face masks at all times when they are out in public. A study published on June 16, 2020 found that, after two to three weeks of mandatory face mask use, the daily COVID-19 growth rate declined by 2% between March 31, 2020 and May 22, 2020. This may sound small, but three weeks of a 2% daily decline results in an over 40% decrease over time.

Virtually all health experts say that face masks help prevent the spread of COVID-19, and leading infectious disease expert Anthony Fauci, M.D., recently said that it may be time to impose a nationwide face mask rule. Although face masks, social distancing, and hand washing are 18th century methods of preventing disease, they work and must not be abandoned, even after people are vaccinated, until herd immunity is achieved and we have COVID-19 under control.

Conclusions

The data from the programs described above and from our Comprehensive Engagement Plan will be collected starting in March of 2021 and will be shared with healthcare personnel, political representatives, and related organizations to make sure that African Americans and Latinos get vaccinated without hiccups. We affirm to our members that we will do everything within our power to ensure that they have access to the highest quality of healthcare in the time of COVID-19.