

NBCI's Detailed Engagement Plan on the COVID-19 Vaccines

Here is NBCI's detailed Engagement Plan on how we will mobilize our 150,000 churches to ensure that the nation's 42 million African Americans are vaccinated against COVID-19. It uses every major institution in the African American community including, but not limited to, churches, businesses, business groups, the Black media, Black newspapers, sororities and fraternities, and civic and neighborhood associations. This COVID-19 plan is being activated in tandem with the NBCI's National Flu Campaign (NFC) that currently operates in African American neighborhoods in 42 U.S. cities.

The COVID-19 vaccination plan has three main goals:

1. **Work with each state's public health system.** Each state has submitted a COVID-19 vaccine distribution plan to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The NBCI will work with state and local governments and health departments to bring the state's plan to African American communities in a culturally competent way. We will help disseminate critical information about COVID-19 vaccines to our friends, families, church members, neighbors, colleagues, and all of our Black social circles to make sure every African American gets vaccinated.
2. **Create a comprehensive outreach and education plan about the COVID-19 vaccines tailored specifically for the African American community.** NBCI's plan is written to integrate with each state's CDC plan, but only a meticulous, thoughtful, and culturally relevant outreach and education plan will persuade African Americans and other minority groups to be vaccinated against COVID-19. Older, more traditional plans, or "one-size-fits-all-cultures" plans will not work.

The NBCI will engage both the Black church and the Black media in its efforts, and they will be central to our success. We will use social media, word of mouth, and other marketing tactics to make sure we reach every diverse element of the African American community.

NBCI's Engagement Plan is written to prevent the traditional cultural competency failures each state can make, even if their chief public health officer is a Black man or woman. One person cannot properly represent a community of 42 million people, no matter how hard they try; but the NBCI's huge resources and expertise are set up to do so and have demonstrated their worth and dependability throughout many health campaigns. The members of the NBCI are the foot soldiers the states need to ensure that their efforts are successful, and we are happy to be part of the team.

3. **Administer COVID-19 vaccines in an effective, safe, and culturally sensitive setting.** Vaccine distribution must fit into the life, community, and cultural habits of the most vulnerable populations that need it, including those who work in retail, those who interact with the public on a daily basis, pregnant women, dependent children, the homeless, and

individuals with compromised immunity, especially in areas where the poverty rate is above 30-40%. Most of each state's resources need to be spent in areas with greater poverty levels. No matter how difficult it is, not providing vaccines to these areas and these populations will ensure the spread of the COVID-19 virus. None of God's precious children can be neglected.

Each state's public health education strategy on COVID-19 vaccine distribution and vaccination should contain parts of the NBCI's Engagement Plan. Integrating our plan into each state's strategy will ensure that all the state's most vulnerable individuals get vaccinated, including those communities that have a vaccine-resistance rate above 80% (see Vaccine Resistance). Only culturally tailored plans that speak to the concerns of each community will work. If cultural competency is ignored, the result will be a frightened and reluctant population that refuses to get vaccinated.

Misinformation and bad science abound in the Internet era, and they can create chaos and confusion in already fearful communities. If the states can include the NBCI and other culturally focused organizations on their planning teams, we will not experience major setbacks and we will get our society back on track in a timely manner.

Action Steps

The NBCI has assembled an impressive medical team of five African American and four Latino physicians under Dr. Joseph Webster, who oversees the NBCI's COVID-19 Data and Information Committee. The Committee will evaluate the scientific data Pfizer and Moderna submitted to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in their requests for Emergency Use Authorization. It will also talk with Pfizer's and Moderna's medical staffs and other health experts about how the vaccines were developed, their composition, and their individual ingredients.

The Committee is preparing itself to tackle tough questions from the African American and Latino communities. All nine physicians will serve as public educators through social media, cable TV, talk shows, etc., to educate African American and Latino leaders and lay people about the efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccines. Our focus is to train trainers in all 100 major Black and Latino civil rights groups as well as other major stakeholders in both communities.

We have two goals: 1) to counter myths and half-truths about the vaccines, which will hopefully result in 2) persuading Blacks and Latinos to trust the COVID-19 vaccines and get vaccinated.

The NBCI's COVID-19 Data and Information Webinars

The nine physicians who are part of the NBCI's COVID-19 Data and Information Committee will host webinars to share information about the benefits of the COVID-19 vaccines on Zoom and other virtual platforms. These Zoom calls will include lawyers, public health officials, neighborhood influencers, civic groups, teachers, church-based volunteers, and others, with the goal of mobilizing a large group of individuals in every community.

Implementing the NBCI Engagement Plan

Once the NBCI COVID-19 Data and Information Committee receives all the scientific information from Pfizer's and Moderna's applications to the FDA, they will report back to the NBCI Clinical Strategy Task Force (NCS). The NCS is an independent group of Black health professionals who are national experts in a variety of disciplines. They develop and/or approve the training and education for all healthcare providers, volunteers, church leaders, and Health Corps members that participate in any NBCI special program/grant/contract. The NCS also provides guidance, clinical oversight, recommendations, and scientific and technical support to the NBCI. The NCS was developed to achieve the following:

- Develop targeted messaging to combat erroneous information about COVID-19,
- Develop and institute safety protocols (i.e., the use of PPE, COVID testing, social distancing, etc.) for any NBCI team operating in the outside community.
- Develop and deliver education and training for all NBCI team members working on this project.
- Provide guidance, clinical oversight, scientific, and technical support throughout the project.

This group of experienced clinicians and infectious disease experts will also be responsible for educating everyone on the NBCI team.

Another major responsibility of the National Clinical Strategy Task Force is to combat erroneous information about COVID-19 and defend the integrity of the vaccines. The task force will serve as an advocate for the vaccines, touting the sound ethics and commitment to safety of their developers. NBCI denominational leaders will be advocates for the vaccines and address the concerns of African Americans and Latinos about getting vaccinated.

Once evaluations are completed, internal discussions will be held as to how to present this information to the NBCI's 150,000 church leaders who represent 37 major Black Protestant denominations. The Clinical Strategy Task Force will produce a one-page fact sheet about the vaccines that will be distributed to the NBCI leadership and NBCI congregations all over the country. This handout will be certified and approved by the Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO): a major pharmaceutical trade group of which Pfizer and Moderna are members. The purpose of BIO's certification is to ensure that the scientific information soon to be distributed is consistent and factual. Once the one-page fact sheet is approved and certified by BIO, we will use it as the basis of our outreach campaign throughout the country.

Informing Major African American Stakeholders

Once the NBCI Clinical Task Force approves the findings of the NBCI COVID-19 Data and Information Committee, we will hold an extensive consultation with major religious, health, and civil rights organizations throughout the country.

Reverend Anthony Evans, the current president of the NBCI, will convene the leaders of the NBCI's 37 denomination along with the nine physicians on the NBCI Data and Information Committee to discuss the information in Pfizer's and Moderna's applications to the FDA. Rev. Evans will ask the physicians to explain to the religious leaders exactly what the data means, then answer their questions so they can return to their congregations with accurate information on the COVID-19 vaccines, feel comfortable publicly endorsing the vaccines, and be willing to get their vaccinations in public. We would like all the religious leaders to get publicly vaccinated together at an African American church, then participate in a news conference where we spell out the NBCI's plan to get all 42 million U.S. African Americans vaccinated.

As part of the first step in selling this plan to the Black community, NBCI has sent letters to all major and minor African American organizations in the country, such as the National Urban League, the College University School of Medicine, Morehouse School of Medicine, Charles Drew School of Medicine, the National Medical Association, the National Black Nurses Association, and the W. Montague Cobb Health Institute. We will consult with these organizations for at least one week over Zoom.

The Nuts and Bolts of Implementing the COVID-19 Engagement Plan: Program Elements

- I. Consultation and Representation
- II. Education and Training: publishing a series of YouTube videos that can be easily accessed by first responders, mobile churches, etc.
- III. Literature Distribution
- IV. Outreach: grass-roots community outreach, traditional Black media (radio, television, newspaper), and social media
- V. Getting Vaccinated

NBCI's detailed engagement plan will be sent to the office of the President of the United States and the COVID-19 Health Advisory Committee. Dr. Anthony Fauci will be copied on all communications. The plan will also be shared with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Office of the Surgeon General, the Director of the CDC, the Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and a special copy will be sent to the NIH National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities. The NBCI will employ the HHS Building Vaccine Confidence Campaign to target the "movable middle" of Americans hesitant to get vaccinated. We will also work with the Ad Council, a nonprofit group known for successful national ad campaigns (including the campaign that promoted the polio vaccine in the 1950s) to prepare a coronavirus vaccine campaign in January of 2021.

The 37 major denominations will send out the following instructions to all of their religious jurisdictions and districts, and the NBCI will send the instructions to its five faith command centers in Atlanta, New York, Detroit, Dallas, and Oakland, California. The instructions are:

1. The NCBI and the 37 denominations must endorse the COVID-19 vaccines and encourage African American congregants/churchgoers to get vaccinated when it is their turn to receive the vaccines.
2. Individual church members from various denominations should sign up through our website to serve as community-based influencers and work with state, county, and city health authorities to distribute and administer the COVID-19 vaccines to every segment of their geographical areas.
3. Everyone should distribute the one-page handout on COVID-19 vaccines which was approved by NBCI Clinical Task Force and Data and Information Committee and certified by BIO.
4. People should spread the word to everyone in their personal networks and friendship and social media circles on the importance of getting a COVID-19 vaccine, and share the one-page handout with these people as well.
5. Everyone should do their part to make sure that everybody in their particular congregation and religious community receives a COVID-19 vaccine.

National Denominational Leaders and Local Church Leaders

The NBCI staff will educate and provide critical information to the 37 denominational leaders and local ministers concerning the vaccines, their safety, and how important it is to public health that everyone get vaccinated. Members of the NCS Task Force and the NBCI leadership will answer all their questions to dispel any concerns.

Our national leaders will then go back to their respective denominations and become advocates of the vaccines to their member churches, making it easier for our physicians to answer questions and encourage our members to get vaccinated. The key here is education and answering all the questions of our denominational leaders, ministers, and church stakeholders.

The NBCI administrative staff will make sure that our leaders have all the accurate information they need to convince their local congregations to get vaccinated, and we will ask all NBCI pastors to do the same.

All of our local pastors will receive the following information in a timely manner, based on their zip code:

- A comprehensive explanation of the COVID-19 vaccines.
- Enough literature for all the members of their congregation plus other relevant information, like the Pfizer or Moderna websites, to which they can refer people with questions.
- The location of the nearest local clinic, Walgreens, and other participating pharmacies from which to get the vaccines based on their church location and zip code.

- A step-by-step guide on where and when to access the vaccines and how to encourage church members to get vaccinated.
- Access to a telephone number of at least one of the NBCI's 250 participating physicians so they can get answers to questions from a qualified medical professional. The NBCI central staff will arrange this.

NBCI Blast E-mail

The NBCI will create a blast e-mail that will go to its 27.7 million members. It will contain critical information on the vaccines and locations where people can get vaccinated around the country.

Faith and Science Recruitment Approach

Dr. Joseph Webster will bring 250 African American and Latino doctors together with African American and Latino ministers so they can create a science and faith-based approach that will inspire our 27.7 million members to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

One hundred of the doctors (50 African American and 50 Latino) will become influencers and advocates for the vaccines in their communities. These doctors will also reach out to an additional 150 doctors to encourage them to motivate their patients to get vaccinated.

The vast majority of these doctors, who will be compensated for their time, are part of NBCI congregations and the NBCI HED Volunteer Health Corps. They will be chosen because they understand the value of the vaccines and the impact COVID-19 has had on their individual communities. They will educate all the people they can on the COVID-19 virus and the value of the vaccines.

Outreach to Major Civil and Human Rights Organizations

Dr. Owen Garrick will be responsible for outreach and education to all the major civil rights groups in the country, including the NAACP, the National Urban League, Rainbow Push (PUSH), the National Action Network, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the National Poor People's Campaign.

He will work closely with the National Hispanic Medical Association and NBCI Hispanic specialists. His main task will be to answer questions and dispel concerns from these major groups concerning the integrity, ethics, safety, and value of the COVID-19 vaccines. He will provide education and literature and try to get the groups he addresses to become vaccine advocates.

Dr. Garrick will also be responsible for reaching out to the 8,500 neighborhood civic associations and local groups in and around the zip codes where local clinics, Walgreens, and other participating pharmacies are located.

Dr. Garrick works with Dr. Webster and Rev. Evans on the Critical Response Team.

Outreach to the African American Medical Schools and Health Establishments

Dr. James McCoy is head of the Department of Surgery at Morehouse College of Medicine and will be responsible for outreach to his medical school colleagues at the Howard University School of Medicine, Meharry School of Medicine, and the Charles Drew School of Medicine. He will also work with the NBCI's Hispanic specialist to reach Latino medical groups.

He will send these organizations information on Pfizer's and Moderna's scientific approaches so they can reassure their colleagues and the people they serve about the ethics, integrity, value, and importance of the vaccines and add an extra layer of comfort for participants.

Critical Response Teams (CRTs)

Dr. Joseph Webster and Dr. Owen Garrick will organize multidisciplinary critical response teams in 15 communities that consist of nurses, ministers, physicians, community activists, and public health specialists to visit critical zip codes, like the major inner-city housing project Co-Op City in the Bronx that has a population of 40,000.

The CRTs will recruit and train members of the community, including churches and healthcare providers, to educate the public and encourage people to get vaccinated. They will also be a critical part of all the NBCI's outreach efforts and will tap into local resources to make sure people are able to: 1) get vaccinated, 2) identify people infected with COVID-19, 3) isolate those who are infected, 4) help contact trace and get people antibody tested to determine who is protected and who is still vulnerable, 5) manage emotional health.

Bi-directional communication will be the key to accomplishing these goals. All CRT teams will be updated weekly from NBCI headquarters and report back on which community health centers are overburdened, how to get access to well-resourced institutions in their area (local academic medical centers and private practices), and county/local restrictions vs. state/national restrictions.

They will keep track of local public health teams monitoring outbreaks, share local ideas about clinical guidance, talk about how to support high-risk group living situations, staff local investigation teams, identify local clinics in their areas (especially in underserved communities), find isolation hotels for homeless people with COVID-19, find isolation hotels that will take in people who cannot isolate at home due to overcrowding or safety concerns, check consumer resources to identify which grocery stores have enough food and which stores sell masks/gloves/disinfectants, provide up-to-date information on hospital capacity and which community health centers and private practices are open or partially open, and explore the availability of the COVID-19 vaccines. They will also respond to calls and e-mails from the public, businesses, and community partners.

The CRT teams will support NBCI's Engagement Plan by:

- Developing and disseminating culturally and linguistically diverse multi-media outreach and education.

- Harmonizing communications for the African American and Latino communities regarding the availability of the COVID-19 vaccines.
- Promoting the use of best available prevention, treatment, and research strategies for COVID-19 through links to a trusted informed network of resources.
- Identifying future healthcare needs and research questions on COVID-19 for the African American and Latino communities through awareness and analysis of each community's needs.

The Composition of a CRT Team (15-20 individuals)

- Local team leader
- Clinical Leadership – Latino and Black doctors and nurses/public health professionals
- Community representative
- Outreach workers/volunteers (5-10)
- Mental health specialists
- Church/community-based organizations
- Academic leadership - HBCU/Nursing School/School of Pharmacy

Organization of African American Churches by Zip Code

The NBCI will act at the zip code level and work with state, county, and city health authorities to help them implement their COVID-19 plans. All our 150,000 churches will connect with agencies and organizations geographically close to them.

Our churches will mobilize themselves around nonprofits, community-based civic groups, major stakeholders, and thousands of volunteers. Churches will make sure that all their members and every individual who lives within five blocks of their church in each direction receives three things: encouragement, literature, and information on when and how to get vaccinated.

We expect that 700-1,000 NBCI churches will participate in every city. Their roles and responsibilities are outlined below:

- Ten percent of the churches will serve their area hospitals by helping critical care providers. They will clean first-responders' houses, get groceries for them, and do whatever is needed so they can focus on self-care, the needs of their families and, most importantly, the needs of their patients. The NBCI is still working out the logistics of implementing this plan and has discovered that its execution will depend on the amount of PPE available to NBCI members.
- Two hundred churches will ensure that everyone is properly educated on how to approach community and church members with compassion, cultural sensitivity, and love. These churches will focus their care on vulnerable populations such as the poor, the blind, seniors, and the disabled. They will make sure the one-page handout on the importance of getting vaccinated is given to everyone they serve. The NBCI may add an additional 200 churches to this particular role in areas with high poverty rates such as Baltimore, Cleveland, Detroit, Richmond, Memphis, and New Orleans.
- One-hundred fifty churches in each city will help city health departments run mobile clinics, help transport people to vaccination centers to get their shot, and distribute PPE and literature as necessary.

- The NBCI's 30 mega-churches in each state will cover everyone within a 25-mile range of their church community and are responsible for reaching out to rural areas and trailer parks near the cities of Chicago, Los Angeles, and Houston. We will provide them with all the literature for education they need.

150,000 Congregational Volunteers

The NBCI has 150,000 congregational volunteers at our disposal. We will ask these people to recruit five people within their church to approach state officials and ask them to make sure that their African American and Latino constituents know about the vaccines. All 150,000 volunteers will make sure that everyone is notified that the vaccines have arrived and tell their community members where to go to get vaccinated.

Church and Clinic Partnership

African American churches have a long tradition of developing and maintaining relationships with local clinics throughout the country. In fact, many African American churches have had clinics on their religious campuses or property for over 20 years. As part of the NBCI's engagement plan, we will integrate local clinics with our churches to ensure everyone is educated and vaccinated against COVID-19.

Mental Health and the Vaccines: NBCI will be guided by the Association of Black Psychologists

The NBCI will also be working with the Association of Black Psychologists, a professional organization founded in 1968 in San Francisco, to develop literature on mental health and how to deal with anxieties around COVID-19 and the vaccines. This literature will mirror the one-page handout and will feature contact lists, website links to local psychologists, and other resources on mental health.

Black psychologists are experts in the field of mental health and they also understand Black culture. They can communicate better than anyone else with Black people during this very tough time and will be a big help in overcoming vaccine resistance. We are now working on strategies to deal with trauma and racism.

GET VACCINATED NOW!

The main priorities of the NBCI's Engagement Plan are outreach, education, and the vaccination of every single member of our African American and Latino communities. We will spread positive and encouraging messages about COVID-19 vaccines in grocery and retail stores, and train our members who work in beauty salons and barbershops to spread the message as well. We will put pro-vaccine messages on church websites, and place signs on both Black and white churches that say that this institution believes in the vaccines. By developing grass-roots strategies that reach every area of the communities we serve, the NBCI will help slow and stop this dangerous disease.