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# **Building a Sustainable Action Plan for Prevention, Detection, and Treatment of COVID-19 for the African American and Hispanic Communities Across the United States**

**White Paper**

## **Offered by the Consortium of:**

**Westat, Inc. – Coordinating Center**

**University of Maryland Center for Health Equity – Lead of Academic Partners**

**National Black Church Initiative – Lead of Community Outreach and Activities**

**National Medical Association – Co-Lead of Professional Health Affiliates**

**National Hispanic Medical Association – Co-Lead of Professional Health Affiliates**

**National Association of Community Health Centers – Lead of Clinical Access**

**March 30, 2020**

**Prepared for:  
White House COVID-19 Task Force  
Washington, DC**

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## I. Our Ask

To stridently move forward, we respectfully request the opportunity to have the Office of the Vice President, Mike Pence, and the COVID-19 Task Force review this white paper and join a virtual meeting to discuss details of this action plan. Our point of contact is Dr. Howard Fishbein, Senior Epidemiologist at Westat, Inc. Telephone is (443) 812-5710; [howardfishbein@westat.com](mailto:howardfishbein@westat.com). He is available to take your call or respond to your e-mail.

## II. Executive Summary

The goal of the COVID-19 Sustainable Action Plan (SAP) is to deliver to the African American and Hispanic populations health messaging, clinical testing and assessments, and treatment guidelines, through trusted sources known to these communities.

This SAP is led by a Consortium offered through Westat, Inc., a premier health research and communications organization, with partners including the University of Maryland (UMD) Center for Health Equity; the National Black Church Initiative (NBCI); Morehouse University; selected Historic Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU); the National Medical Association (NMA); the National Hispanic Medical Association (NHMA); and the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC) nationwide.

The Consortium will build an infrastructure using the NBCI network of 150,000 churches and the 10,000 clinical facilities available through the NACHC to serve these two communities of high risk, to combat COVID-19 now, and to be sustainable in managing healthcare emergencies in the

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future. NBCI and the NACHC will have trained health coordinators to manage the SAP activities at each of these clinical sites.

The sustainable infrastructure we build, as a product of this Consortium, will positively impact 100 million Americans, with a special focus on African American and Hispanic communities of color.

Westat will lead an expert panel comprised of, but not limited to, professionals from UMD Center for Health Equity, the NMA and NHMA physician associations, National Institutes of Health (NIH), and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), to analyze information to be disseminated to communities through the NBCI and NACHC infrastructure developed. The expert panel will review:

- Health Information Exchanges with NIH, CDC, and State Health Departments on COVID-19 as to the availability, clarity, and utility of the information;
- Timeliness and reach of interventions and therapies provided by medical personnel/clinical specialists as they deliver preventive interventions, therapies, and vaccines, as they become available;
- Contact tracing, which many local public health agencies are too overwhelmed to perform and our Consortium network can absorb this overload; and
- Satisfaction of local community leaders and patients with services provided and outcomes realized.

In addition to disseminating information and guidance for COVID-19, this infrastructure can be used to support ongoing community health issues, such as cancer, diabetes, and need for nutritional guidance.

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NACHC, with centers located nationwide, is positioned to serve as distribution points of care within these communities. Similarly, nationwide community-based organizations, as part of the Consortium, will provide these communities with accurate, useful, and timely information. These organizations have on-the-ground experience. Solutions we produce for these communities will serve as the model for managing pandemics and public health emergencies that come in the future.

This Consortium ensures equitable opportunities for testing, counseling, distribution of personal protective equipment, as recommended per CDC, drug therapies, and vaccines in areas where vulnerable populations reside. Since February 2020, NBCI has been very active at the community-level by using their church community to distribute over 20 million copies of CDC COVID-19 infographics to families, businesses, workers, and schools. We will build on the trust and momentum we have with leaders in these communities and provide assistance to preserve health and limit mortality from this virus in the African American and Hispanic communities.

In summary, the infrastructure we establish and inform with our Consortium partners will be sustainable and able to continue to serve these African American and Hispanic communities through the current crisis of COVID-19 and be there for future outbreaks. This is a plan that will safeguard health in these underserved communities, be conducted using a rigorous scientific approach, and be delivered by known and trusted community organizations. Following feedback from the administration, we can prepare a detailed proposal, timeline, and budget within 7 days. All key Consortium staff leads are available to discuss this proposal given a 24-hour notice.

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### **III. Organizations Leading the Consortium**

**Westat Inc.**, serving as the Coordinating Center, has more than 50 years serving in similar roles for numerous National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) programs and research studies that are national in scope. Westat has and continues to work on several long running clinical coordination contracts serving the NIH, including, for example, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) HIV and Other Infectious Diseases Clinical Research Support Services (CRSS) contract where Westat supported NIAID-funded sites around the world from 2011-2017. Under this contract, Westat supported the Site Evaluation Visit (SEV) Process for the Vaccine Research Center (VRC). Westat also supported the development of assessment tools tailored for Zika studies (including laboratory, pharmacy and clinic assessments). For more than 25 years, Westat has served as the coordinating center for a network of clinical sites that participate in a broad range of projects for the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) International and Domestic Pediatric and Maternal HIV Studies Network. Westat continues to conduct the long-term and ongoing National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) contract. In earlier times, Westat served as the National Children's Study (NCS) Coordinating Center providing assistance to 37 U.S. research sites across the country from 2005-2009. Westat employs a pool of experienced Clinical Research Associates (CRAs) located throughout the U.S. Westat CRAs have monitored studies for National Cancer Institute (NCI), National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH), NIAID, and CDC. These CRAs will be tapped as needed to support the work of this Consortium.

Westat is one of the Nation's leading public health research and communications companies.

Dedicated to improving lives through research, Westat has doctoral level researchers who continue

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to pioneer new ways to collect, manage, and analyze data. Westat provides leadership and coordinates public health research at the local, state, and national levels; disseminates findings to the lay public and research community; and develops and implements evidence-based communications campaigns to raise awareness and change behavior. In addition to a successful reputation managing large-scale observational studies, demonstration projects, and clinical trials, Westat is recognized for developing and implementing high-impact, award-winning national social marketing campaigns for NIH and CDC and for developing and nurturing partnerships with a broad array of community-based organizations.

**University of Maryland's Center for Health Equity** will provide leadership in the preparation of materials and appropriate tailored campaigns for clinical care providers. Other academic institutions we have approached to be active with our Consortium include Morehouse University, Emory University, Howard University College of Medicine, Meharry Medical College, and Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science. These academic centers bring research credibility that will resonate with health care providers who provide direct care in these communities. These efforts will help engage health care providers arming them with trusted information tailored to this audience.

**The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI)** outreach represents a total of 150,000 churches that includes 34,000 African American and Latino churches with 15 million members across the country, and has outreach capabilities to reach an additional estimated 115,000 affiliated churches.

The NBCI can engage many other African American organizations, including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, National Black Newspaper Association, National Baptist Convention, and National Council of Churches, to extend the programs and

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activities into the African American and Hispanic communities. NBCI is fully prepared to use its established national health information network to inform communities about activities the Consortium will be providing in response to COVID-19. The SAP will garner support for the African American and Hispanic communities through engagement in the messages and guidelines for detection and treatment for COVID-19 through these outreach efforts of the NBCI network.

**The National Medical Association and the National Hispanic Medical Association** will coordinate with NBCI and Westat to oversee the outreach provided by physicians, psychiatrists, and psychologists to the African American and Hispanic communities we will be reaching. The National Association of Community Health Centers, which includes over 10,000 community-based centers and partners across the country will be designated locations where information, treatment, and vaccinations (when available) on COVID-19 will be provided to the African American and Hispanic communities. Given the access point of care to occur at community health centers, and other community-based organizations, this will help ensure equitable opportunities for COVID-19 education, virus testing, distribution of drug therapies and vaccines in the future, to be readily available where vulnerable populations reside.

#### **IV. Key Staff Biosketches**

Key staff are immediately available to begin work.

**Howard Fishbein, DrPH,MPH** will serve as the primary investigator (PI) for the project and lead the Coordinating Center for the Consortium. Dr. Fishbein a senior epidemiologist, will be the main point of contact and will oversee the activities in all task areas. Dr. Fishbein's 35-year career highlights provide the experience needed to manage and guide this multipronged engagement effort.

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Dr. Fishbein is a proven effective leader and manager of large multisite public health programs at the national, state, and local levels, including more than a dozen different statewide health department program evaluations, for which he served as project manager. Dr. Fishbein's work as a senior epidemiologist includes Center director positions at the Rhode Island and Massachusetts Departments of Public health, expert scientist for the Agency for Health Care and Policy Research, and Senior Researcher and Project Manager in private sector public health research. He has a long history of engaging communities and providing healthcare services and programs to providers and populations underrepresented in public health research. He worked directly with 40 Veterans Health Affairs Medical Centers to improve engagement of their workforce to improve care for veterans. Dr. Fishbein served as PI of NHLBI's Healthy Communities Study (HCS), which focused on finding ways to curb the obesity epidemic. The HCS collected data in 100 communities across the United States. Dr. Fishbein was also co-lead of the Recruitment and Retention Committee for the National Institute of Diabetes Digestive and Kidney Disease's National Diabetes Prevention Program, a multicenter trial examining lifestyle intervention and treatments to prevent or delay the development of diabetes. He conducted research in four geographic regions of the U.S. separately with African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians to gather qualitative and quantitative information about these populations' interests and willingness to participate in public health programs focused on prevention and early treatment.

**Stephen Thomas, PhD**, will serve as the Lead for community and multicultural engagement. He will lead this work from experience as the founding director of the UMD Center for Health Equity, an NIH Center of Excellence on Race, Ethnicity and Health Disparities Research. Dr. Thomas is a professor in the School of Public Health at UMD and is internationally recognized as one of the

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nation's leading scholars on community engagement. Dr. Thomas has been a lead investigator of multiple studies investigating racial differences in health outcomes, including an NIH-funded National Bioethics Research Infrastructure Initiative, Building Trust between Minorities and Public Health Researchers. He will engage Morehouse University, Emory University, Howard University College of Medicine, Meharry Medical College, and Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science in the development of outreach materials to health care providers and the public within the African American and multi-ethnic communities we are targeting with education, prevention, and treatment messaging.

**Reverend Anthony Evans, President of the NBCI**, brings over 23 years of extensive experience working in the District of Columbia and around the country on faith-based and social initiatives for the disadvantaged. He will direct all activities and tasks of the NBCI. NBCI was organized to address the growing health disparities of African Americans. During the last 17 years, Rev. Evans has developed the budget, provided fiscal oversight, managed fundraising initiatives, completed the organizational strategic plan, and hired and trained staff for the NBCI. In addition, he has provided oversight on technical assistance initiatives for faith-based communities. He serves as the liaison between faith-based communities, government agencies and community-based organizations. Rev. Evans does extensive national and community work in youth crime prevention, sickle cell disease, assisting the United Way, and personally provides volunteer services to a homeless shelter, the DC jail, and serves as an advocate for the mentally retarded.

**Owen Garrick, MD**, will work directly with Reverend Evans at NBCI and oversee the educational materials and clinical guidelines being provided to clinicians at the community health centers and

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community-based organizations delivering messages to the community of healthcare providers. Dr. Garrick is CEO of Bridge Clinical Research which is the leading research organization focused on minority health and improved outcomes. He earned his MD from the Yale School of Medicine and MBA from the Wharton School of Business. He holds an AB in Psychology from Princeton University. Dr. Garrick has served on the boards of several leading healthcare organizations, including Sutter Health – Bay Area Division, Quorum Review IRB, the New York Blood Center, and Mentoring in Medicine & Science, Samuel Merritt University and the American Medical Association Foundation where he was board President. He was also formerly a member of the HHS Secretary’s Advisory Committee on Human Research Protections.

**Evelynn Lewis, MD**, will lead the Clinical Advisory Board overseeing clinical protocol development for health care providers at the National Medical Association and the National Hispanic Medical Association, clinical health centers and the community-based organizations. Her professional and research interests include the impact of culture and cultural competency on health and healthcare outcomes, education and training of healthcare professionals, health management and disease prevention. Dr. Lewis is nationally recognized for her expertise in the areas of community outreach, engagement, Veteran health, program development and evaluation, and healthcare disparities. Dr. Lewis earned her medical degree from the University of the Health Sciences. Currently, she serves as Chief Medical Officer for Warrior Centric Health, LLC; Board Chair for the National Children’s Center. She is an Adjunct Associate Professor, Department of Family and Community Health, Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and Clinical Instructor, Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science. Previous positions include Senior Researcher in Minority Health and Health Disparities Dillard University; President American Academy Family Physicians Foundation;

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Deputy Director, W. Montague Cobb/ National Medical Association Health Institute. She is a member of several professional organizations and medical associations including the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of Family Physicians Foundation, the National Medical Association (NMA), the American Medical Association (AMA), and the Commission to End Healthcare Disparities.