



**Community
Catalyst**

December 2023

Partner Spotlight: New Horizon Ministries

The Pivotal Role that Faith-Based Organizations and Personal Relationships Play in Advancing Vaccine Equity in Mississippi

BACKGROUND

Through support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Partnering for Vaccine Equity (P4VE) program, Community Catalyst's Vaccine Equity and Access Program (VEAP) partners with over 90 community-based organizations (CBOs) across the United States. To increase COVID-19 and influenza equity, these community health partners build vaccine confidence and promote vaccine uptake in communities of color.

One such example is [New Horizon Ministries, Inc. – NHCI \(NHCI\)](#), a non-denominational, independent, faith-based organization based in Hinds County, Mississippi. With a population of approximately 227,742, Hinds County is home to several richly diverse communities with over 69% identifying as Black. By prioritizing partnership and community outreach, NHCI has expanded from serving the local Black community of Hinds County to people across the state of Mississippi.

THE CHALLENGE

Vaccine hesitancy and mistrust are major hurdles to vaccine access within Hinds County, especially in relation to COVID-19 and influenza vaccines. Several community members were skeptical of the government's involvement in vaccine development, feared vaccine complications and outbreaks of COVID-19 variants, and were hesitant toward requirements about the newly updated COVID-19 vaccine. In an effort to better understand the best means of building trust, NHCI collected data from community members and identified educational group discussions and events as a potentially effective way to overcome stigma, tackle mistrust of health providers, and focus on vaccine safety.



Mayor of Jackson, MS, Chokwe Antar Lumumba, and NHCI Staff Mary Harris and Deniece Williams pose at a 2021 Mississippi Vaccination Drive focused on promoting COVID-19 vaccination rates in the state.

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Success for us means that we are continuing to build relationships with our community – its leaders and people – and that we continue to provide needed services to keep our community healthy. It also means that we are making a [positive] difference in people’s lives – the more vaccines, health information and health-related services we provide to our community, the healthier and safer our community members are.

Mary Harris, NHCI VEAP Coordinator

THE APPROACH

Boots on the Ground & Deploying Trusted Messengers

NHCI began holding events, including community health and wellness fairs, where they would distribute free services like vaccinations, health and wellness screening, and food giveaways to engage local community members. These touchpoints created opportunities for NHCI to develop and build relationships with community leaders, business owners, and health and wellness providers while maintaining a strong reputation within the communities they serve.

NHCI has also invested in building strong community partnerships to ensure they are pairing their outreach efforts with trusted messengers. A powerful example is their ongoing work with local barbers, stylists and salon operators, whom they recognized as trusted community members with a wide reach who also shared the goal of helping people stay healthy and prevent the spread of illnesses. Through these partnerships, NHCI was able to share critical health information such as the importance of vaccine access or where people can find a vaccine provider in salons and barbershops across Hinds County.



NHCI hosts various community events such as a “Back-to-School” event where health education resources are distributed to community members alongside other school supplies.



Partnership should include four things: Networking, Resources, Expansion, and Creditability.

Mary Harris, NHCI VEAP Coordinator

The Work Continues: Town Halls and Long-Covid Programming

Based on the success of these community-first public health events, NHCI plans to continue building relationships and supporting the development of community partners. They are now focused on conducting town halls as part of a goal to implement a long-COVID program. In addition to continuing to share educational resources, the organization plans to set up vaccination sites within the community to provide the newly updated COVID-19 vaccine, as well as RSV and influenza vaccines. NHCI will also continue to host health and wellness events to have open community discussion and deepen connection with community leaders.

AUTHORS

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IMPACT AT A GLANCE

- » NHCI co-hosted **2 vaccination events** with partner Mississippi Faith Based Coalition.
- » Held **3 town halls** (2 libraries & 1 Congregational Nurse/Advocate Training)
- » Participated in **22 partner events** where NHCI has shared and **distributed COVID-19 and Flu information** with community members and via flyers.
- » NHCI **plans to co-host two other vaccine events** along with Mississippi Faith Based Coalition and continue to participate in our community partners events.

REFERENCES

"Ways to Overcome Barriers." The Houston Chronicle, 8 Aug. 2018, <https://work.chron.com/ways-overcome-barriers-9720.html>

U.S. Census Bureau (2020). Hinds County, Mississippi Population. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/hindscountymississippi/PST045222>

ABOUT COMMUNITY CATALYST'S VACCINE EQUITY ACCESS PROGRAM

Community Catalyst is working to build the power of people to create a health system rooted in race equity and health justice, and a society where health is a right for all. Since 2021, Community Catalyst's Vaccine Equity and Access Program (VEAP) has partnered with 90+ community-based organizations (CBOs) to develop and implement effective health communications and community engagement strategies. to address COVID-19 and influenza vaccination hesitancy in racially and ethnically diverse communities.

Learn more about Community Catalyst and our community-first public health initiative at communitycatalyst.org.

Learn more about New Horizon Ministries and their work in Mississippi at <https://www.nhcms.org>.