



The Wellness Coalition

THE WELLNESS COALITION

RIVER REGION HEALTH EQUITY ALLIANCE

PROJECT REPORT 2021–2023

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CHALLENGE

The Wellness Coalition (TWC) seeks to address the problem of COVID-19 vaccination disparities in the River Region of Central Alabama, with an initial focus on the African American population in three Black Belt counties: Montgomery, Lowndes, and Macon.

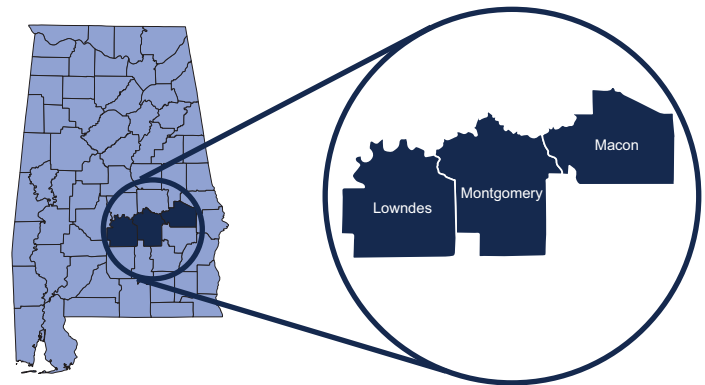
The River Region of Central Alabama has poor health insurance coverage, limited access to health-care, and higher rates of chronic disease across the board, especially in rural areas. A 2018 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report showed Alabama had the second highest cardiac death rate in the nation—224.7 out of 100,000 people compared to the national rate of 163.6.

CDC’s 2017 Cities Project showed the City of Montgomery (50 percent of our focus area) had a higher prevalence than the nation on cardiovascular issues for adults 18 and older:

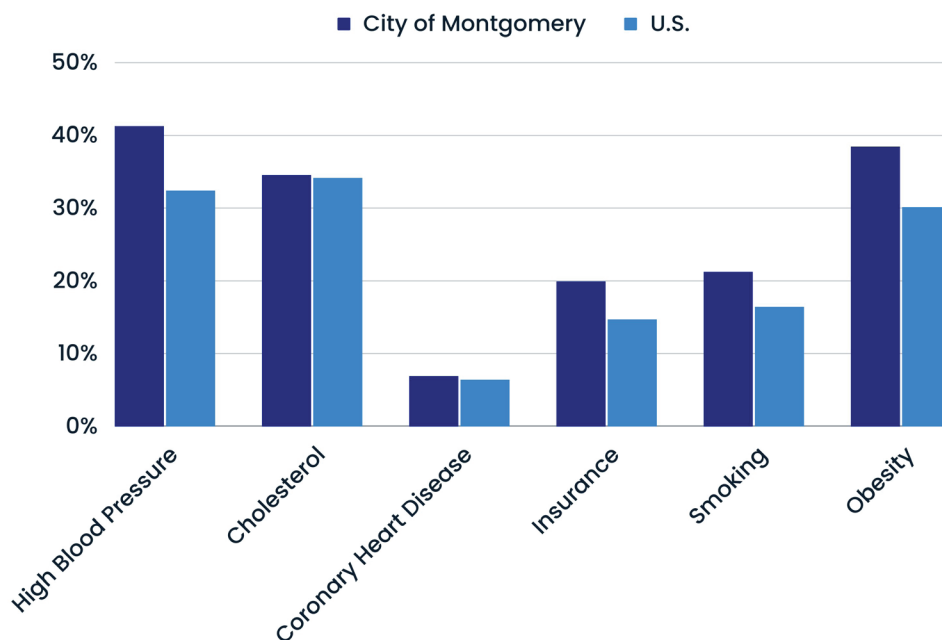
- High blood pressure 41.2% (U.S. 32.4%)
- High cholesterol 34.5% (U.S. 34.1%)
- Coronary heart disease 6.9% (U.S. 6.4%)
- No health insurance 19.9% (U.S. 14.7%)
- Smoking 21.2% (U.S. 16.4%)
- Obesity 38.4% (U.S. 30.1%).

Additionally, racial disparities also exist in the impact of chronic disease. Generations of structural inequity and systemic racism have resulted in limited access to healthcare, high prevalence of chronic disease, and significant health disparities experienced by minorities, elderly, non-English speaking-people with disabilities, and those in low-income and low education communities.

African Americans are significantly more likely to die of stroke. Alabama’s incidence of diabetes—14 percent—is even higher in older age groups—20.1 percent in people aged 45-64 and 25.9 percent of those aged 65+ as compared to 14.6 percent and 23 percent nationally. Alabama also has a disparity in the effects of diabetes—17.3 percent of Black persons compared to 10.3 percent of white persons. Rates are also higher among persons with less than a high school education and in those with incomes less than \$25,000.¹



Prevalence of Cardiovascular Disease Among Adults 18 And Older



When COVID-19 hit the United States in 2020, the devastating consequences of our fragmented health system and deeply-rooted systemic racism became even more painfully apparent. People of color are up to 4 times more likely to die from COVID-19 than white Americans, and they have also experienced the most severe economic impacts. According to a report by The New York Times, Alabama health officials estimate that just 15 percent of COVID-19 vaccines have gone to African Americans, who make up 27 percent of Alabama’s population and 31 percent of all deaths from COVID-19. Whites, who make up 69 percent of residents, have received 54 percent of the vaccine supply, according to state data.

Equitable access to the COVID-19 vaccine is also affected by vaccine mistrust and hesitancy, and is compounded by logistical barriers to vaccine access, including internet access and technology skills, transportation, disability, language, undocumented status, unclear registration instructions, and other challenges that have produced a particularly pronounced COVID-19 burden. In addition, anecdotal reports have found structural barriers erected by the vaccination process, such as requiring a social security number, request to pay for the statutorily free vaccine, and requiring proof of age, citizenship, underlying condition, or insurance.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Organize the River Region Health Equity Alliance with broad community partner representation and a clear structure for roles and operation
- Engage partners in developing a joint response plan with clear performance metrics
- Award at least two sub-grants to community partners
- Work with the Alliance to plan and implement strategies to improve vaccine access
- Work through Community Ambassadors to implement informal strategies to address access issues and challenges
- Implement formal vaccine assistance strategies to improve equity in access to vaccines
- Develop and implement a locally-tailored communications plan to address vaccine confidence and prevention behavioral measures
- Develop and implement a multi-channel dissemination plan
- Engage Community Ambassadors to develop vaccine confidence in the community

SOLUTIONS

Health Equity Alliance

The first official Health Equity Alliance meeting was held Monday, September 13, 2021. We held 21 monthly meetings. Our main strategies were:

- **Coalition Building:** Engage with sub-grantees and other partners/stakeholders to work toward decreasing vaccine inequities.
- **Vaccine Access:** Work through Community Ambassadors to implement strategies to address access issues and formal vaccine assistance strategies to improve equity in access, such as mobile and temporary clinics.
- **Education and Outreach:** Develop, implement, and disseminate locally tailored communications plan and engage Community Ambassadors to develop vaccine acceptance.



The Wellness Coalition vaccination clinic with HSI, the Town of Mosses, and the Alabama Conference of Black Mayors, on December 4, 2022.

Activities

September 18, 2021	Partnered with the Lowndes County Sheriff's Office and Parks Pharmacy for a job fair and vaccination clinic; 7 people were vaccinated.
October 30, 2021	Attended the Montgomery County Sheriff's Department Spooktacular event and dispersed more than 600 COVID-19/TWC educational flyers. We also donated treats.
November 13, 2021	Partnered with Health Services, Inc. (HSI), the Town of Mosses in Lowndes County, and the Alabama Conference of Black Mayors for a vaccination clinic; 19 people were vaccinated.
December 4, 2021	Partnered with HSI, the Town of Mosses, and the Alabama Conference of Black Mayors, for a vaccination clinic; 22 people were vaccinated.
February 12, 2022	Held a Town of Mosses vaccination clinic; 19 people were vaccinated.
March 10 through April 19, 2022	Held a series of 8 vaccination clinics at RHEMA Health and Wellness in Macon County with Dr. Denah Maxwell Stafford; 45 people were vaccinated.
March 15, 2022	Held a focus group at the Macon County Cooperative Extension with 9 local community members to help increase vaccine confidence.
April 19, 2022	Held a focus group in Montgomery County at the Juliette Hampton Morgan Memorial Library with 7 local community members to help increase vaccine confidence.
May 17, 2022	Held a focus group discussion at the Family Services Center of Lowndes County with 6 local community members to help increase vaccine confidence.
May 21, 2022	Participated in A Tour of Wellness Community Health Fair in Montgomery County to increase vaccine confidence by offering COVID-19 education and PPE to attendees.
June 11, 2022	Participated in A Tour of Wellness Community Health Fair in Macon County to increase vaccine confidence by offering COVID-19 education and PPE to attendees.
June 25, 2022	Participated in A Tour of Wellness Community Health Fair in Lowndes County to increase vaccine confidence by offering COVID-19 education and PPE to attendees. We also partnered with Parks Pharmacy for a vaccine clinic; 13 people were vaccinated.
July 23, 2022	Partnered with HSI, Bell Resurrection Baptist Church, and Montgomery native/NBA player/Founder of Forever My Brother's Keeper Foundation, JaMychal Green, for a Vax To School event. We also donated 93 bags of school supplies. 12 people were vaccinated.
July 28, 2022	Partnered with HSI and Montgomery Public Schools for a Back-to-School Resource Fair for parents and families at the Eastdale Mall. We also donated 50 bags of school supplies. 21 people were vaccinated.
February 28 through March 30, 2023	Partnered with RHEMA Health and Wellness Center for a series of 12 vaccination clinics at RHEMA Health and Wellness in Macon County with Dr. Denah Maxwell Stafford. 66 people were vaccinated.
April 8, 2023	Partnered with HSI at the St. Jude Apartment Complex for Seniors in Montgomery County. 18 people were vaccinated.

Communications

The Wellness Coalition developed communications materials to dispel COVID-19 vaccination myths, to education and inform the target audience about vaccination opportunities, and to garner participation in program initiatives. Materials and messages were disseminated via event flyers, educational brochures, social media, partner newsletters, eblasts, digital ads, and more.

- Number of unique communications materials developed: 46
- Number of people that viewed web communications: 61,238
- Number of impressions on web communications: 431,330
- Number of publications and formal materials: 0

COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic

Tuesday, April 5, 12, and 19
9am-5pm
Thursday, April 7
9am-12pm

RHEMA Health and Wellness
3805 West Martin Luther King Hwy,
Tuskegee, AL 36083

Available Vaccines:

- Johnson & Johnson
- Moderna
- Pfizer
- Vaccines are available for anyone 5 years and older.
- Booster shots are available for those who qualify.

The first 5 people to get a vaccine will receive a \$25 gift card.

NO appointment is necessary.

For more information, call The Wellness Coalition at 334-293-6502.

The Wellness Coalition RHEMA

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

The Health Equity Alliance is hosting a focus group to discuss COVID-19 and vaccines. We are looking for African American adults between 19-64 years of age to participate. Due to limited seating, participation is only open to the first 10 people who register and confirm.

**TUESDAY, MARCH 15
5:30-7:30PM**

Macon County Cooperative Extension
207 North Main Street in Tuskegee

All participants will get a \$25 Visa gift card!

Register now by scanning the code or by visiting:
bit.ly/HEAFOCUSGROUP

QUESTIONS? Call (334) 293-6431.

The Wellness Coalition

FREE COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic

Tuesday, Feb. 23, March 7, 14, 21
Wednesday, March 22
Thursday, March 2, 9, 16, 23
Saturday, March 18

9AM - 1PM

RHEMA Health and Wellness
3805 West Martin Luther King Hwy,
Tuskegee, AL 36083

Additional Details:

- Vaccines are available for anyone 5 years and older
- Available vaccines:
 - Moderna
 - Pfizer
 - First, second, and bi-valent booster doses
- ID is required
- Bring vaccination card if available
- Basic health screenings available

NO appointment necessary.

For more information, call The Wellness Coalition at (334) 293-6502.

The Wellness Coalition RHEMA

"VAX TO SCHOOL!" EVENT GALLERY: JAMYCHAL GREEN & BELL RESURRECTED

The Wellness Coalition's Vax to School clinic was definitely a success! Bell Resurrected Baptist Church volunteers were very welcoming. NBA star and TWC COVID-19 Trusted Messenger Jamychal Green donated school supplies and received a COVID-19 booster shot. Thank you to all who attended. If you'd like to help us promote vaccination in our communities, call The Wellness Coalition at 334-293-6502 today!

NBA star Jamychal Green returns for vaccination from Tuskegee, Ala. and talks with local children.

Well also like to thank the following individuals and organizations for providing for helping to make the event possible:

- 211 Area
- Alabama FFA
- Bell Resurrected Baptist Church
- Blue Cross Clearing Service
- Helderia Fila 365
- House of Cards
- Pastor Sadeck Fisher
- Forever My Brother's Keeper
- The Wolf Club

Family Seniors Center Children's Policy Council

PROTECT AGAINST COVID-19

A safe and proven vaccine is available.

Find out where to get one at thewellnesscoalition.org/COVID

The Wellness Coalition

GET THE FACTS ABOUT COVID-19 VACCINES

Find answers to your questions at bit.ly/TWCFACETS

The Wellness Coalition

The Wellness Coalition
Published by Alysia Serjones • April 18, 2022

The Wellness Coalition formed the Health Equity Alliance to address COVID-19 vaccination disparities in the Black Belt counties of Macon, Montgomery, and Lowndes, focusing on the African American population.

"We know that some of the distrust of the COVID-19 vaccines is rooted in the historic medical abuse African Americans experienced in our state," said Carmela Fleming, Health Equity Alliance program coordinator for The Wellness Coalition. "We hope that by building community trust, debunking vaccine myths, and making vaccines available to those who need them most, we can increase vaccination rates and protect our community."

If you are interested in learning more or joining the HEA, you can do so here: <https://bit.ly/TWC-HEALTHEQUITY>.

See insights and ads Boost post

BENEFITS OF A Healthy Lifestyle

A healthy lifestyle offers many benefits, including helping to prevent heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and other chronic diseases. Another important benefit is that healthy routines enhance your immunity.

The immune system is the body's way of protecting itself from infection and disease; it fights everything from cold and flu viruses to serious conditions such as cancer.

Find **FREE** resources for a healthy lifestyle at thewellnesscoalition.org. Topics include:

- Nutrition information
- Fitness centers
- Quitting tobacco
- Healthy corner stores
- No-cost wellness programs
- **And more!**

Stay Healthy BY BOOSTING YOUR IMMUNITY

The Wellness Coalition

(334) 293-6502 | thewellnesscoalition.org
3060 Mobile Hwy, Montgomery, AL 36108

The Wellness Coalition WellnessAlabama

Made possible with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The Wellness Coalition

The Wellness Coalition
Published by Laura Jellum • April 13

Join us for a focus group on Friday, April 14! The first 15 people who register and confirm will receive a \$50 Walmart gift card for their participation – registration is required: bit.ly/VAXFOCUSGROUP.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Friday, April 14
10:30AM-12PM

**FRI, APR 14
COVID-19/Flu Vaccine Focus Group**
Montgomery, AL
2 Went · 1 Interested

RESULTS

Coalition-Building

The Wellness Coalition engaged with sub-grantees and other partners/stakeholders to work toward decreasing vaccine inequities. We also worked through Community Ambassadors to implement strategies to address access issues and implement formal vaccine assistance strategies to improve equity in access including mobile and temporary clinics, providing transportation, and more.

Health Equity Alliance Members 2021-2023

- Mary Wedgeworth, South Central Alabama Development Commission (AAA)
- Janice Patterson, Town of Mosses
- Prince Williams, Lowndes County Sheriff's Dept.
- Roosevelt Woods, III, Retired US NAVY Chief
- Sederick Fluker, Bell Resurrected Baptist Church
- Sheree Taylor, Alabama Partnership for Children
- Traci Howell, Tie and Doll Organization
- Angel Walker, Macon/Russell Community Action Agency
- Roberta Crenshaw, Macon Mean For Cancer
- Evan Milliagan, Alabama Forward
- Jerry Ingram, Southeast Research
- Tiffany Chaney, Baptist Health
- Richard Williams, Metropolitan United Methodist Church
- Doretha Heard, Macon Means for Cancer
- Janice Hall, Macon County Extension Coordinator
- Crystal Nelson, Registered Nurse/St. Paul AME
- Andrea Callahan, Field Director/Why Not Us.Live
- Kamisha Blowe, Health Services Inc
- Christina Levert, Alabama Partnership for Children
- Julie Waters, Mental Health America
- Nada Al-Assi, Alabama Department of Public Health
- Clark Adams, Central Alabama Jaguars
- Molly Stone, Medical Outreach Ministries
- Le'Andrea Anderson-Tolbert, The Wellness Coalition Representative

Sub-awardees

- Health Services Inc.
- RHEMA Health and Wellness
- Metropolitan United Methodist Church Community Ambassadors

Education and Outreach

- Developed, implemented, and disseminated locally-tailored messaging to increase vaccine confidence.
- Engaged local audiences to contribute to changes in their knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs.
- Increased vaccine confidence in the priority population as demonstrated via surveys and focus groups.
- Increased number of people with access to vaccinations via events, mobile clinics, and partnerships.
- Capacity to improve/sustain targeted approaches was increased.
- General and local populations reduce risky practices and adopt protective practices.
- Improved knowledge of treatment of, and mitigate poor outcomes of, COVID-19 among local populations.
- Reduced COVID-19 transmissions, cases, hospitalizations, complications, and deaths.

Surveys and Focus Groups

Surveys developed by evaluation team and program staff (vaccine confidence and other COVID-related knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs) and distributed to priority population members.

- Survey Target: 300 survey responses
- Survey Actual: 343 survey responses received
- Focus Group Target: 3 focus groups
- Focus Group Actual: 3 focus groups completed

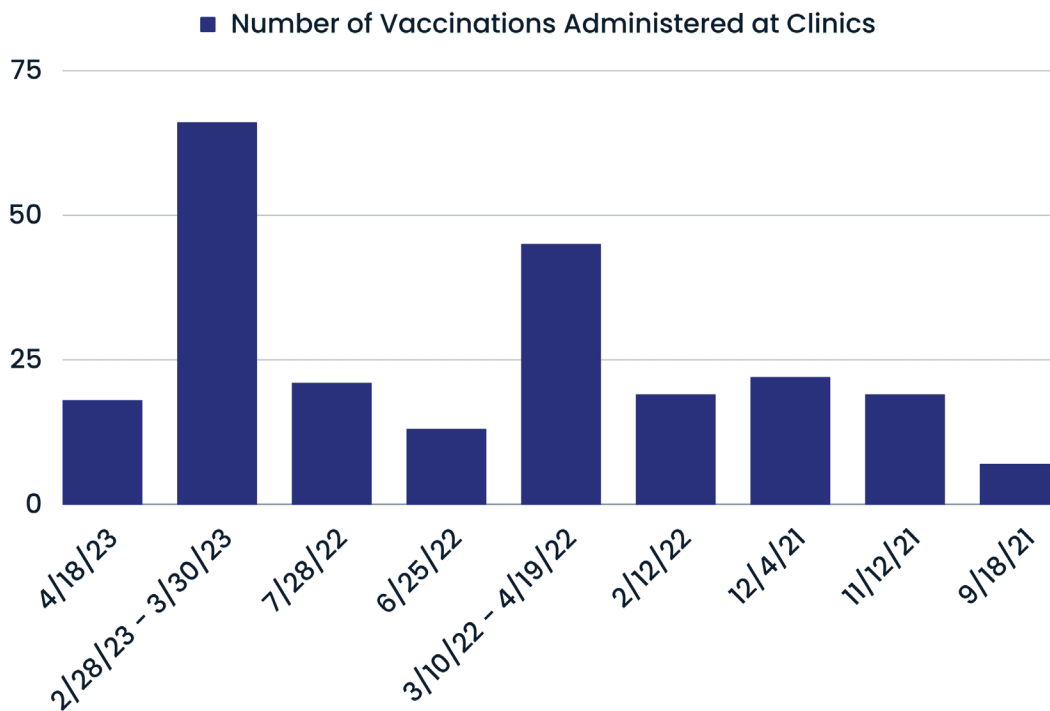
Increased Vaccine Access

Numbers of temporary and mobile clinics facilitated by this effort (locations, duration of clinics, whether or not a previous clinic had been held in locations served):

- Target: 9 clinics
- Actual: 28 clinics completed

Increase in number of people whose access to vaccination was facilitated by this effort (number of clinics held in locations where clinics had not previously been held and population of vaccine eligible people with access; records of clinics held, locations, number attending with demographics, and estimates of population numbers who potentially could be served by the new clinics):

- Target: Increase vaccination access for 39,102 people
- Actual: 21,306 people experienced increased vaccination access



SUSTAINABILITY

The Health Equity Alliance program has completed its grant term, and we advised the members to continue the relationship with The Wellness Coalition by becoming a Trusted Messenger through the REACH COVID/Flu team and/or joining the REACH Advisory Board.

Trusted Messengers are community members, whether community health workers, nonprofit leaders, healthcare providers, faith-based leaders, local celebrities, or residents who assist in spreading information about COVID-19 and influenza virus and vaccine updates. The messengers also meet quarterly with the REACH COVID/Flu team to discuss the virus, vaccines and events. Messengers are expected to attend at least one COVID/Flu event and promote events with their organizations.

By growing our Trusted Messenger base, we can continue to increase COVID-19 education, vaccine confidence, and keep the relationship with the alliance members should we ever embark upon another outbreak/pandemic. This will allow a swift response to the needs of the communities we serve to increase overall health equity.

LETTERS OF SUPPORT

I would like to express my gratitude for allowing me the opportunity of being a volunteer member of the Health Equity Alliance. I've served our country for over thirty-five years, both on active duty and currently as a civil service employee but the opportunity and knowledge I've gained being a part of a "hometown alliance" is something to treasure. To be a member of a group of concerned, well-organized citizens was an experience that should be shared. Please consider me for any future endeavors, I would absolutely consider volunteering again. Thanks again and my God bless and continue to cover you!

Very sincerely,
Roosevelt Woods III, USN, Retired

My name is Sederick Fluker and I participated with The Wellness Coalition as a member of its Health Equity Alliance. I must say that I was extremely impressed with the mission, organization, and execution of this initiative.

The staff of The Wellness Coalition was absolutely amazing in bringing us together from various backgrounds of service to focus in on solutions to address gaps in information and action concerning the COVID-19 pandemic. The team-based approach to coordinating vital vaccination events across multiple counties in central Alabama saved countless lives, I'm sure. I believe the response of the Health Equity Alliance to the needs of the community is a model worthy of state/national duplication before or during the next major crisis that affects the health and wellness of citizens.

I can't say enough about the coordination and organized "action-steps" that emerged from the monthly meetings while staff worked on the ground daily to simply "make things happen" for the good of the community. Mrs. Carmela Fleming, in particular, demonstrated extraordinary leadership along with her fellow colleagues of The Wellness Coalition/Health Equity Alliance – under the direction of Mrs. Ghandi Daniels. It was very rewarding to be a part of an alliance that didn't just talk about solutions but implemented them. Talk is definitely cheap when it comes to the price of life!

My church, Bell Resurrected Baptist Church, in the Hunter Station Community of Montgomery, Alabama was able to host a mobile vaccination clinic in the church's parking lot. I will forever remember the smiles on people's faces as they exited the mobile unit having received their first, second, or boosted vaccination. Thanks again for the opportunity to be a part of the Health Equity Alliance, and may The Wellness Coalition continue to connect those who "can help" with those who "need help."

Warmest Regards,
Sederick Fluker, Pastor



The Wellness Coalition

(334) 293-6502 | thewellnesscoalition.org

3060 Mobile Highway, Montgomery, AL 36108



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@WellnessAlabama

Made possible with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.