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## **America's Blood Centers, Allies Mark Sickle Cell Awareness Month with a Call for Diverse Donors**

*Increased diversity among blood donors critical to treatment of Sickle Cell patients*

**Washington, DC** – America's Blood Centers (ABC), the national organization of community-based, independent blood centers that supply 60 percent of the nation's blood supply, today joined with allies in marking Sickle Cell Awareness Month this September with a call for increased diversity among blood donors to best meet patient needs. Blood transfusions are a key treatment often used to relieve symptoms of sickle cell, an inherited blood disorder affecting approximately 100,000 people across the country and occurring in 1 out of every 365 African-American births. Those interested in donating can find the local community blood center near them online [here](#).

Frequently transfused patients, such as those with sickle cell disease, often require blood from blood donors of similar ethnic and racial backgrounds. Despite the importance of blood transfusions as part of the treatment of sickle cell, [less than 20 percent](#) of all blood donations currently come from communities of color. Increasing that percentage is one of the best ways to support those individuals with diseases like sickle cell, since one in three African-American blood donors are a match for a sickle cell patient.

“Sickle cell patients rely on a diverse and available blood supply to treat the effects of this disease and mitigate complications. Less than twenty percent of all blood donations come from communities of color today. Sickle Cell Awareness Month is a yearly call to action for America's blood donors to give generously and help build a more diverse and available blood supply for all those who depend on it,” said Kate Fry, Chief Executive Officer at America's Blood Centers.

“Now is the time during Sickle Cell Disease Awareness Month to stand up and take action for people with sickle cell disease, a blood condition that affects more than 100,000 Americans,” said Regina Hartfield, President and CEO of the Sickle Cell Disease Association of America. “One of the most important ways we can help is by giving blood. Blood transfusions are crucial to people with sickle cell disease, so I ask you to show up this month, give blood and save a life.”

“There are so many ways to support the sickle cell community, but donating blood is one of the most immediate and impactful. Individuals living with sickle cell disease urgently need a safe and reliable blood supply to manage their health year-round,” said Tessa Youngner, Sickle Cell Disease Programs Specialist of the Sickle Cell Disease Coalition. “However, many Americans are unaware of this need, and of the fact that the genealogy and ethnicity of donors affects the success of blood transfusions delivered to people living with sickle cell. National Sickle Cell Awareness Month is a powerful opportunity to spread awareness and inspire new, more diverse blood donors to lend an arm and join the fight to conquer sickle cell.”

First recognized by the federal government in 1983, Sickle Cell Awareness Month is now marked across the globe each September as an opportunity to raise awareness about this disease and the funding necessary for research. Sickle cell disease is an inherited blood disorder causing red blood cells to have a sickle or crescent shape. Patients are often in a chronic state of anemia and require frequent blood transfusions.

ABC recently released [a first of its kind guide](#) that highlighted that although a blood transfusion is needed every two seconds in the United States, just three percent of the U.S. population donates blood each year. A single

donation can help two or more patients in need, and each donation can be separated into more than one blood product, including red blood cells, plasma, and platelets.

Founded in 1962, America's Blood Centers is the national organization bringing together community-based, independent blood centers. Its member organizations operate more than 600 blood collection sites providing close to 60 percent of the U.S., and a quarter of the Canadian, blood supply. These blood centers serve more than 150 million people and provide blood products and services to more than 3,500 hospitals and healthcare facilities across North America. All ABC U.S. members are licensed and regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. For more information, visit [www.AmericasBlood.org](http://www.AmericasBlood.org).

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