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## **America's Blood Centers, Allies Encourages Donors to Give to Help Diversify the Blood Supply Ahead of Juneteenth and World Sickle Cell Awareness Day**

*One in three African American donors are a match for a sickle cell patient*

**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 allies in encouraging all eligible individuals to give blood to help strengthen and diversify our nation's blood supply ahead of the Juneteenth federal holiday and World Sickle Cell Awareness Day, which are both recognized on Monday, June 19<sup>th</sup>. Blood from a diverse donor base is critical for those living with diseases like sickle cell that require blood components matched more precisely than just blood type, matches more likely to be found in donors of a similar racial and ethnic background of the recipient patient. Those interested in donating can find the local community blood center near them online [here](#).

ABC continues to advocate for public policy that promotes the value of blood to patients, communities, and the healthcare system as part of its [Advocacy Agenda](#). This includes working to increase diversity in the donor base to ensure blood products are available for frequently transfused patients like those living with sickle cell disease or Thalassemia. As part of this work, ABC is asking Congress to develop and implement a new program that would provide grant funding to support blood centers' efforts to reach young and diverse blood donors and fund testing to identify the closely matched united essential for frequently transfused patients, ensuring current and future patient needs are met.

"A diverse blood supply is crucial for those living with diseases like sickle cell, yet less than twenty percent of blood donations in the United States come from communities of color. Individuals that receive regular blood transfusions, like those with sickle cell disease, often require more precisely matched blood from a donor with a similar ethnic background. That is why this is such a critical moment for people to give blood and for Congress to do its part to give community blood centers the resources they need to reach more diverse donors," said Kate Fry, CEO of America's Blood Centers.

"Our team at the Children's National Hospital's Blood Donor Center, Blood Transfusion Service and Hematology Division work in a tight collaborative team to ensure we recruit diverse blood donors who can provide highly matched blood for our patients with Sickle Cell Disease" said Dr Meghan Delaney, D.O., M.P.H., Director of Transfusion Medicine and Chief of the Division of Pathology & Laboratory Medicine at Children's National Hospital. "It is important for the long-term outcomes of our patients to ensure safe and effective transfusion therapy. Our collaborative program places a high priority on providing highly matched red blood cell units whenever the patient needs them, or as part of their treatment regimen when the patient is receiving definitive therapy for Sickle Cell Disease, such as transplantation or gene therapy."

"Donating blood is one of the most self-less acts one can do. There's literally life in your blood. More importantly, one will never know if one day they may need blood as well. It's important we keep a diverse supply," said Tahirah Muhammad, Chief Operations Officer of Crescent Foundation.

"Our research shows that transfusions for people living with sickle cell disease are common, and that creating better matches is one step that can have great impact to reduce the risk of complications for people requiring regular transfusions," said Angie Snyder, Ph.D., lead of the Georgia Sickle Cell Data Collection Program at the

Georgia Health Policy Center. “The simple, yet generous act of donating blood can help people living with sickle cell disease survive and thrive.”

World Sickle Cell Awareness Day is observed annually on June 19<sup>th</sup> to raise awareness about the disease and its impact on patients, their families, and caregivers. 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. The more blood transfusions a person receives, the more likely they are to require a match beyond just a blood type – they’ll need blood donations from those that also match their ethnic background. That’s common for those with diseases like sickle cell, which predominantly impacts people of color. This reality is one of many reasons why we need a diverse and available blood supply.

ABC has released [a first of its kind guide](#) that highlights how just 19.5 percent of all blood donations come from racial or ethnic minority donors. Increasing that amount of one of the best ways to support those living with diseases like sickle cell, since one in three African American blood donors are a match for a sickle cell patient.

This guide highlights 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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