



AU Health to target Augusta's underserved communities as part of public vaccination effort

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AUGUSTA, Ga. (Jan. 25, 2021) – In an effort to help encourage [COVID-19](#) vaccination in Augusta's underserved and minority communities, [Augusta University Health](#) is partnering with local churches and the Georgia Department of Public Health to provide greater access to COVID-19 vaccines and education through clinics at places of worship located in the surrounding area.

The vaccination program kicked off at 3 p.m. Monday, Jan. 25, when local church leaders received their COVID-19 vaccine at Good Shepherd Baptist Church, 1714 Olive Road in Augusta. That event will be followed by two pop-up clinics on Thursday, Jan. 28, at Good Shepard and Warren Baptist Church (The Edge at Warren), and one pop-up clinic Friday, Jan. 29, at Augusta University's Health Sciences Campus, available to members of the public meeting criteria for the Georgia Department of Public Health's Phase 1a, including individuals 65 and over. Eligible individuals can register for future appointments on the [AU Health website](#). Augusta University faculty, staff and students eligible to receive the vaccine in Phase 1a are also encouraged to sign up for the Friday clinic.

"We know that this pandemic has taken a disproportionate toll on underserved communities, including many of those surrounding Augusta University's campuses," said university president [Brooks A. Keel](#), PhD. "As the state's academic medical center, it is our responsibility to make sure no community is left behind, and that commitment is rooted right here in our home city of Augusta."

Targeting underserved and minority communities is the first phase of AU Health's public vaccination plan, with additional phases including an expanded effort for the community at large.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Black Americans have been contracting and dying from COVID-19 at rates higher than any other racial or ethnic group in the country. Despite the statistics, however, a new report from the Kaiser Family Foundation found that nearly 35% of Black adults are not planning to get the COVID-19 vaccine. In Richmond County, where more than 50% of the population is Black, Dr. Stephen Goggans, director of the East Central Georgia Department of Public Health, said it is critical to provide access to reliable information on the safety and effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccine.

“In Black and underserved communities, churches are a trusted resource for health education and play a pivotal role in addressing health care disparities like that seen with the virus that causes COVID-19,” Goggans said.

The vaccine effort will build on Augusta University’s partnerships already in place with area churches for initiatives related to cancer prevention and more.

“The pandemic has illustrated that we are truly all in this together,” said AU Health CEO [Katrina Keefer](#). “These are our neighbors, friends and family – and together with our community partners, we must do our part to protect them through compassionate and quality health care and education.”

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Augusta University is Georgia’s innovation center for education and health care, training the next generation of innovators, leaders and healthcare providers in classrooms and clinics on four campuses in Augusta and locations across the state. More than 9,000 students choose Augusta for educational opportunities at the center of Georgia’s new cybersecurity hub, and experiential learning that blends arts and application, humanities and the health sciences. Augusta is home to Georgia’s only public academic health center, where groundbreaking research is creating a healthier, more prosperous Georgia and world-class clinicians are bringing the medicine of tomorrow to patient care today.