



American
Red Cross

CIRCLE OF HOPE

SOUTH CAROLINA SICKLE CELL INITIATIVE



"The pain crises are unpredictable. They can happen at any time. Blood transfusions bring him back to life."

Vesha Jamison, mom of Dreylan, who was diagnosed with sickle cell disease when he was just four weeks old

The Need

Every two seconds, someone in the U.S. needs blood. For people battling sickle cell disease—the most common genetic blood disorder in the U.S., affecting about 100,000 people, primarily of African descent—regular transfusions are essential to managing painful and life-threatening symptoms. Unfortunately, there are frequent shortages of the right type of blood to meet this need.

Our Impact

The American Red Cross is dedicated to identifying the best possible matches for blood transfusion for people living with sickle cell disease.

To fulfill this critical work, the Red Cross of South Carolina:



Hosted over 3,400 blood drives across the state in fiscal year 2024.



Conducts at least 10 tests for infectious diseases on each unit.



Collected 68,769 units of lifesaving blood for patients in need in fiscal year 2024.

The Red Cross Difference

As the largest single blood bank operating on a national scale, the Red Cross:



Local marketing campaigns help educate the public about Sickle Cell and include local media outreach, targeted digital marketing and deepening local relationships with national partners like HBCUs, including South Carolina State University as well as local high schools through scholarship opportunities.



Sickle Cell trait screening is offered to all first time self-identified African American donors. Complex antigen level testing is completed to identify those blood units that are the right blood type match for sickle cell patients. In fiscal year 2024, nearly 2,000 donors identified as first-time African American or mixed ethnicity, which means nearly 2,000 trait screenings were conducted in South Carolina.



South Carolina has an Emerging Markets Manager that builds lasting relationships with local diverse communities to increase diverse blood drives and African American blood donations across the state.

Battling Sickle Cell Disease With Most Compatible Units of Blood

Sickle cell disease causes extreme pain, organ damage, stroke and other life-threatening symptoms. To help alleviate these symptoms, many people with sickle cell disease receive frequent blood transfusions throughout their lifetime — as many as 100 units of blood per patient

each year. Though vital, the frequency of transfusions can cause increased risk of adverse reactions. Finding compatible blood is critical to managing extreme pain and life-threatening complications for patients with sickle cell disease.

Best Matches Equal Best Possible Treatment

For patients with sickle cell disease, the Red Cross plays a critical role in preventing adverse reactions to blood transfusions. We provide in-depth blood testing, typing and matching at our 45 Immunohematology Reference Labs strategically located across the country; we have one right here in Columbia, South Carolina.

Additionally, as blood donors who are Black are three times more likely to be a match for patients with sickle cell disease, the Red Cross is actively working to increase blood donations among Black and African American blood donors. With a keen focus on leveraging strategic and meaningful partnerships with community leaders and organizations, the Red Cross launched the Sickle Cell Initiative in 2021. Since that time, we have built and solidified partnerships with the NAACP, 100 Black Men of America, Inc., The Links, Incorporated, and many more organizations to provide information and expand blood drives in more Black communities. We are inspiring the next generation of blood donors through our work with the HBCU Ambassador Leadership

Program and the Sickle Cell Fighter High School Scholarship Program.

In fiscal year 2024, thanks to the support of our strategic community partners, we provided nearly 150,000 units of blood for people with sickle cell disease. In South Carolina, we collected more than 7,000 units from African American donors. However, we know there is still work to be done and we will continue to increase that number to serve more people in need.

This work is costly, totaling nearly \$14 million annually across the country and more than \$600,000 right here in South Carolina — but worth every penny when helping improve and save the lives of over 4,000 people in South Carolina, and some of the 100,000 people in the U.S., living with sickle cell disease.

Just in the last year, we have had nearly 2,000 new self-identified African American or mixed ethnicity donors in South Carolina. All of these donors were then screened for the Sickle Cell trait. We are working to grow this number year over year as part of the Sickle Cell Initiative.

Help Save Lives

Please join us for the Circle of Hope event on **September 25, 2025** at the International African American Museum in Charleston, South Carolina to help people living with sickle cell disease. A donation for Sickle Cell pays for sickle cell trait testing, HBCU and High School scholarships for young African Americans who host sickle cell blood drives, provides the region with an emerging markets manager, and complex antigen testing to ensure the right type match for our local sickle cell patients.

Thank You!



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