



Helping People with Sickle Cell Disease

The American Red Cross, one of the global Red Cross Societies, has galvanized its resources since 1881 to prevent and alleviate human suffering in the face of emergencies by mobilizing the power of volunteers and generosity of donors. This 139-year-old objective is guided by seven fundamental principles that direct what we do and how we do it.

Humanity: prevent human suffering wherever it is found

Impartiality: relieve suffering based on human needs, without discrimination

Neutrality: exhibit no favoritism in situations where controversies or hostilities exist

Independence: maintain autonomy from other entities

Unity: open to all, one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in each country

Universality: operate worldwide, Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, are equal

Volunteerism: participate voluntarily, not for personal gain



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Belonging to the Red Cross Family

In one way or another, almost everyone has been touched by the American Red Cross. If you have assisted someone or been assisted by the Red Cross during times of disaster or while serving in the military, if you've given or received blood, taught or taken a swimming or first aid class, helped install smoke alarms through our Home Fire Prevention Campaign or donated to the Red Cross, you belong to the Red Cross family.

Our Red Cross family provides blood and blood products to patients who require transfusion therapy. Last year we supplied more than 10,000 units of blood to hospitals across Virginia for transfusion to patients with Sickle Cell, an inherited disease that largely affects people of African ancestry. The disease causes red blood cells to stiffen, becoming sickle (crescent) shaped. Red blood cells, sickle in shape, stick together and block the flow of blood and oxygen through blood vessels in the body, causing complications such as excruciating pain, leg ulcers, tissue and organ damage, and even stroke.

Because Sickle Cell is a genetic disorder, patients with the disease, need closely matched blood from donors of the same race and ethnicity to prevent complications from transfusion therapy. Blood from people of African ancestry results in effective transfusion outcomes for Sickle Cell patients of African ancestry.

Help Us Amplify Needs of Sickle Cell Patients

In partnership with the Baptist General Convention of Virginia, the Red Cross is amplifying awareness of Sickle Cell Disease and the needs of patients and families who face this lifelong challenge for which there is no cure. Our focus on helping Sickle Cell patients is longstanding and ongoing, extending beyond this month, September, which is National Sickle Cell Awareness Month.

Educating people about the needs of patients with Sickle Cell is a Red Cross priority. We would welcome an opportunity to share our Sickle Cell program with you along with our entire suite of humanitarian services. You can expect your local Red Cross office to contact you about our Sickle Cell program or in the interim, contact me directly at helen.parham@redcross.org.

Together we can help more people, especially during this novel, uncertain COVID-19 period. We can help people such as Jalen Matthews, *"With COVID-19, this might be one of the times people like me need blood the most. If we can't get the blood we need, we may have further complications. If those who depend on blood transfusions catch coronavirus, it could be more severe if blood isn't available."*