

Grand Rapids Black Vaccination Resource Committee: Proposed Draft Strategies

The Grand Rapids Black Vaccination Resource Committee, comprised of Jamon Alexander, Khary Bridgewater, Deborah Clanton, Gertrude Croom, Chris Holmes, and Kelsey Perdue, in collaboration with Spectrum Health Healthier Communities, Mercy Health, and Kent County, propose the following two strategies after lengthy deliberation.

The Grand Rapids Black Vaccination Resource Committee is a part of the West Michigan NNICE (National Infrastructure for Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 within Racial and Ethnic Minority Communities) initiative. This initiative is a CDC-funded partnership through Michigan State University. This work seeks to improve overall vaccination rates by targeting where people and systems require increased resources and support in Grand Rapids and Muskegon. This will result in \$465K in GR and \$170K in Muskegon begin granted out in 2021-2022, with the potential for additional funds in 2023 and 2024. Strategy and resource decisions will be driven directly by the individuals most impacted by disparities in vaccination rates through committees called **The Black Vaccination Community Resource Committee** in Grand Rapids and one in Muskegon who will have discretion in the creation of strategy for how funding is used and voting for final proposals for use of funds.

Staff supporting the Grand Rapids committee include Jeremy Moore (PI), Lee Moyer, Dr. Lisa Lowery, Julio Cano, Danielle Gritters, and Alicia Kolkema from Spectrum Health, Scott Opperman from Mercy Health, and Teresa Branson and Mike Fortman from Kent County in Grand Rapids.

Request for Proposal Process

The two strategies below will have two separate Request for Proposal Processes. These are outlined below:

Strategy I. Black-led vaccination activities, scheduling, and community training and resources on COVID-19 and vaccination

This RFP application will be created for the use of the committee to invite a single application to apply. This application will be due by Nov 1, 2021. Spectrum Health will manage the application process, in coordination with Mercy Health and the Kent County Health Department. The Grand Rapids Black Vaccination Resource Committee will review and decide on the final proposal brought forward. The final committee decision will be made and announced by November 12, 2021. Operations should begin by January 1, 2022 for both strategies.

Strategy II. Community-informed plan to engage Black 18-29 year olds

This RFP application will be open to the public starting October 8th, 2021, and closing Nov 1, 2021. Spectrum Health will manage the RFP process, in coordination with Mercy Health and the Kent County Health Department by reviewing and vetting finalist proposals according to the

criteria listed below in the strategy section. **Primary criteria will be 1) organizations funded are from Black-led organizations in Grand Rapids that are 2) already positioned in Black spaces and 3) who are currently mobilized and ready to scale to meet the urgency of the need and funding.** The Grand Rapids Black Vaccination Resource Committee will decide on final proposals brought forward and will have access to a list of all who applied for transparency. The final committee decision will be made and announced by November 12, 2021. Operations should begin by January 1, 2022, for both strategies.

Proposed Strategies

The Grand Rapids Black Vaccination Resource Committee proposes two main initial strategies. The primary strategy is focused on immediate action to open a vaccinate site where Black individuals live in the highest density led by a Black-led organization or collaboration of organizations. This work will also include scheduling with Black, culturally competent staff and also education for Black leaders. The secondary strategy addresses the challenges of low vaccination rates of Black people who are 18-29 years old. This strategy would allow for the development of a community-engaged set of recommendations by a Black-led organization. ***This process will heavily favor organizations that are Black-led and who are already positioned in Black spaces and currently mobilized and ready to scale.*** We do not recommend applying unless your work and organization meet each of these criteria.

Strategy I. Black-led vaccination activities, scheduling, and community training and resources on COVID-19 and vaccination

Estimated Budget Allocation for RFP: \$400,000

Potential costs include facilities, administration, staffing such as RN and MA, registration, financial counselor, claims processing, rev cycle shared services, security, PPE, medical waste, transport, disposal, manifest fee, environmental impact fee, and marketing and communications.

Challenge

In Grand Rapids, there is no low barrier access to COVID vaccination specifically where the highest density of Black people live. There has also not been a Black-led “recruitment” infrastructure coupled to any Black-led vaccination activities to make phone calls, influence Black networks, make appointments, and provide education in neighborhoods with deep financial support. It has also been observed by committee members and in data that basic vaccination questions are being left unanswered in Black communities to compete widely with misinformation. In a recent Grand Rapids African American Health Institute survey on COVID19 understanding, only 50% of individuals surveyed felt they were well informed about COVID, with over a third of individuals saying they felt minimally informed. There are currently few resources dedicated to influencing the social networks that are so important to engaging community feelings about receiving the COVID vaccine.

Strategy

Contract with a Black-led organization or organizations that is currently mobilized and ready to scale to provide:

- 1) free, safe vaccination activities / events with low-barrier scheduling where Black people live offering either Pfizer or Moderna and,
- 2) as part of this work, also funding a well-trained, team from the community responsible for targeted recruiting. This team would be an infrastructure to identify people to recruit for vaccination, make calls, make appointments at the vaccination activities, address questions or objections, and be present in community spaces to recruit people for vaccination appointments.
- 3) Audit and implement training and resources for Black leaders such as pastors, barbers and hair stylist / nail salon owners, funeral directors, teachers and administrators, and other Black community leaders focused on:
 - a.) culturally competent communication of basic facts about COVID and vaccination,
 - b) training on how to deal with objections or concerns about vaccination,
 - c) resources for families and people in need, and
 - d) to identify opportunities for conversations around vaccination and how to initiate those conversations.

Primary Outcomes

Substantially increased Black vaccination rates during the project period, with a goal of reaching 75% overall Black vaccination rate.

Training and education to a significant number of the 65,000 Black people in Kent County using already available culturally competent materials and innovative trainings.

Clear evidence of influencing Black social networks in Grand Rapids to improve knowledge on COVID and vaccination, how to have conversations about COVID19 and vaccination, and dealing with objections to vaccination.

Essential Project Criteria

Primary criteria will be 1) organizations funded are from Black-led organizations in Grand Rapids that are 2) already positioned in Black spaces and 3) who are currently mobilized and ready to scale to meet the urgency of the need and funding

- Creation of a Black network of key influencing partners

- The organization has the ability to identify and reach multiple, diverse Black influencing networks
- The organization has the ability to reach vaccinated and unvaccinated audiences
- The organization has the ability to train and reach people at scale and in 1:1 spaces
- The project considers changes in weather and how Black communities will be reached in colder months
- The project includes an evaluation process where people that receive training can provide feedback to improve the process
- The project must demonstrate strong collaboration with Black-led work already happening in Black spaces
- The organization must demonstrate a willingness to work with a design firm on process improvement and rapid prototyping for methods to engage Black 18-29 year olds.
- The organization must demonstrate racial diversity in their leadership and product delivery.
- Vaccination choices should be readily available and offered at each location, and be between J&J and either Moderna / Pfizer
- Access to vaccination must be simple, low-barrier access with minimal steps
- Organization must be able to work with Spectrum Health and Michigan State University to track and report impact, including individuals served, their demographics, and where each person was served.
- Must build an action-oriented network to mobilize around Black vaccination, including having signed letters of support from participating organizations. Building a network may include nonprofit organizations and churches, but must be broader and significantly include other sectors such as business, arts and culture, and activists and organizers.
- This work must include a strong, funded partnership with a clinic or institution that delivers medical services.

Strategy II. Community-informed plan to engage Black 18-29 year olds

Estimated Budget Allocation for RFP: \$65,000

Potential costs include staffing, facilities, stipends for focus group participation, communications, prototyping experiment costs

Challenge

The rate of vaccination is at 25% for Black people who are in this age range, which is the lowest of all Black age groups. It is unclear what may work to improve vaccination rates for this specific demographic as this group has not been deeply engaged in solution creation for vaccination. Total population in Kent Co. for Black individuals from 18-29 is approximately 14,000. Currently, just over 4,000 are fully vaccinated.

Strategy

Contract with a local, Black-led organization to engage 18-29 year olds in focus groups to provide input, design a plan around what might work long-term to improve vaccination rates for this target group, and implement initial rapid prototyping to test plan assumptions with Strategy I partner.

Primary Outcomes

A plan outlining a set of recommended actions on how to positively increase the Black vaccination rate for Black 18-29 year olds

Rapid prototyping of recommended actions on how to positively increase the Black vaccination rate for Black 18-29 year olds by June 1, 2022.

Essential Project Criteria

Primary criteria will be 1) organizations funded are from Black-led organizations in Grand Rapids that are 2) already positioned in Black spaces and 3) who are currently mobilized and ready to scale to meet the urgency of the need and funding

- The proposal will need to be aimed at conclusions that lead to rapid prototyping in partnership with the West MI NNICE Strategy I partner in reaching Black 18-29 year olds in increasing vaccination.
- The proposal should lead to a plan that clearly articulates the challenges and barriers experienced for Black 18-29 years olds, and articulate solutions as defined by a diversity of Black 18-29 year olds.
- A successful plan and resulting prototyping activities will have a clear and present diversity of voices from Black 18-29 year olds from multiple and diverse spaces across Grand Rapids that are evident and present throughout the process, document, and solutions prototyping.
- The proposal must clearly demonstrate the ability to reach a significant enough number of individuals to reach generalizable conclusions
- The proposal must demonstrate authentic partnership with Black-led organizations and organizations in close proximity to Black spaces
- Proposing organization and key partners must demonstrate racial diversity in their leadership and product delivery.

Strategy I Case for Support. Black-led vaccination activities, scheduling, and community training and resources on COVID-19 and vaccination

1. Examination of free vaccination sites in Grand Rapids shows a clear access issue for 49507. There is currently only one, regular available vaccine site* listed in the map below (Walgreens at 1601 Kalamazoo Ave SE near Boston Ave) in the huge area bordered by the streets listed below.

- 28th street (South)
- Burlingame Ave SW (West)
- Wealthy St (North)
- Fuller St (East)

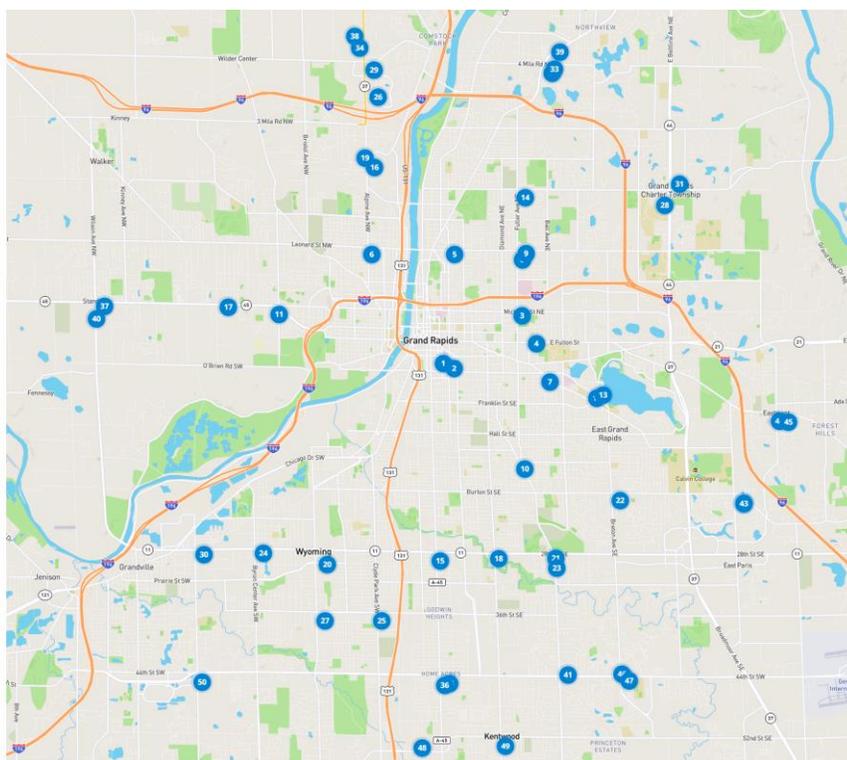
Browning Claytor and Clinica Santa Maria are providing COVID-19 vaccinations to current and new patients, daily. Wege Pharmacy also has walk-ins for COVID-19 vaccine during limited hours. Spectrum Health is offering vaccines at all urgent care facilities. There are other primary care sites through the area that are vaccinating patients through Spectrum Health and through safety-net clinics.

Locations within 10 miles of 49503

with any COVID-19 vaccine and appointments available

Powered by **VaccineFinder**

1. Cherry Health 100 Cherry St Se, Grand Rapids, MI 49503 📍 Check appointment availability (vaccines in stock)	0.21 miles
2. Mercy Health Saint Mary's 200 Jefferson Ave Se, Grand Rapids, MI 49503 📍 Check appointment availability (vaccines in stock)	0.41 miles
3. Walgreens Co. #15007 425 Fuller Ave Ne, Grand Rapids, MI 49503 🟢 COVID-19 appointments available	1.67 miles
4. FAMILY FARE PHCY 1587 #417008 1415 Fulton St E, Grand Rapids, MI 49503 📍 Check appointment availability (vaccines in stock)	1.76 miles
5. Catherine's Health Center 1211 Lafayette Ave Ne, Grand Rapids, MI 49505 📍 Check appointment availability (vaccines in stock)	1.78 miles
6. Walgreens Co. #15466 800 Leonard St Nw, Grand Rapids, MI 49504 🟢 COVID-19 appointments available	1.98 miles
7. CVS Pharmacy, Inc. #08233 1550 Lake Dr Se, Grand Rapids, MI 49506 🟢 COVID-19 appointments available	1.99 miles
8. CVS Pharmacy, Inc. #08292 1155 Fuller Ave Ne, Grand Rapids, MI 49503 🟢 COVID-19 appointments available	2.23 miles
9. FAMILY FARE PHCY 0254 #415012 1225 Leonard St Ne, Grand Rapids, MI 49505 📍 Check appointment availability (vaccines in stock)	2.35 miles
10. Walgreens Co. #2581 1601 Kalamazoo Ave Se, Grand Rapids, MI 49507 🟢 COVID-19 appointments available	2.35 miles
11. Rite Aid #BA101519 2000 Lake Michigan Dr Nw, Grand Rapids, MI 49504 🟢 COVID-19 appointments available	2.59 miles
12. Rite Aid #BA101521 2130 Wealthy St Se, Grand Rapids, MI 49506 🟢 COVID-19 appointments available	2.79 miles



2. There are several mobile or in-home vaccination programs that are available or emerging including:

- Black Impact Collaborative: Received a grant for \$500,000 to increase Black vaccination
- Visiting Nurses Association: home vaccination

- Professional Home Doctors: home vaccination
 - Hispanic Center: Mobile vaccination unit
 - Green Giant: Mobile vaccination unit
 - Lifequest: MDHHS vaccination mobile unit
3. Former access sites at New Hope Baptist and Cesar Chavez were active up until July of 2021. While serving many people, they were ultimately shut down. Some notable observations from administrators as well as the committee:
 - Eventually patient volumes dwindled after early high volumes
 - There was an absence of Black staffing/nurses at the sites
 - Recruitment was relatively de-coupled from the sites. Often, grass roots organizations were asked to fill available slots within a day. However, there was no organized strategy aligning trained, targeted recruitment with site implementation.
 4. Lack of Access and Education is key: several sources indicate that vaccination access and education is a fundamental need in reducing vaccine disparities.

On access, Dr. Gary Bennet, Professor of Psychology, neuroscience, Global Health, and Medicine at Duke [says](#):

“Access matters and it matters a lot,” Bennett said. One clear example of decreased access for Black Americans is that fewer vaccination sites are located in areas with high concentrations of Black people.

However, Bennett said, access does not simply equal place. “How much friction are you creating in this process?” he prompted, pointing to examples of complicated registration systems, inadequate public transportation to vaccine sites, or overall distance from a location. All of these factors already limit who is able to access vaccinations *without* the added influences of reduced vaccine uptake due to vaccine hesitancy.

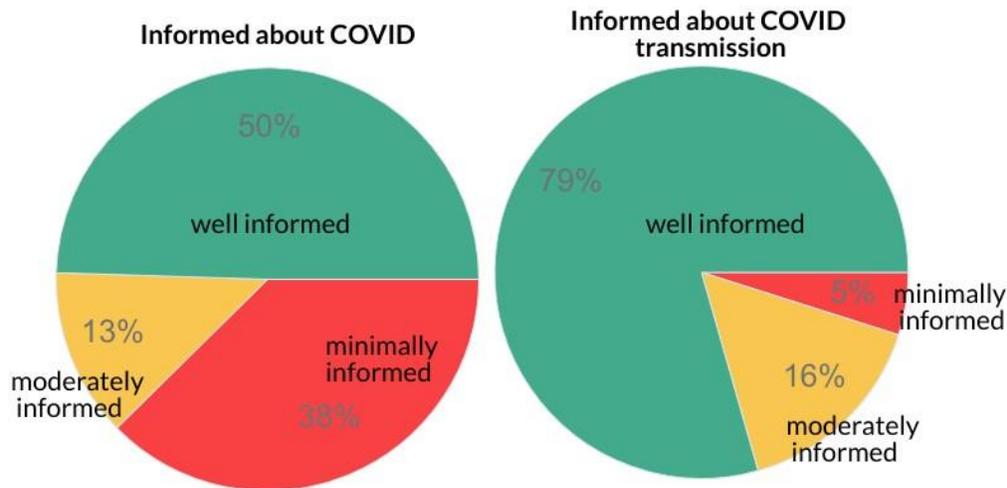
On education, Dr. Bennett sites the importance of social networks. He says, “Our social networks are also vitally important to influencing our feelings about receiving the Covid vaccine. In Black communities, Bennett said, fewer people in their networks have gotten vaccinations and those who have received vaccines are less vocal about it leading to a collective lack of interest in receiving vaccinations.”

“These two factors, paired with understandable uncertainties about the side effects of the vaccine or potentially getting Covid itself, generate the need to change our approaches to vaccine hesitancy and increased uptake amongst Black communities in the U.S.”

The need for further education is seen in research done by the Grand Rapids African American Health Institute. GRAAHI found in the slide below that half of their survey recipients felt well-informed about COVID.

COVID Informed

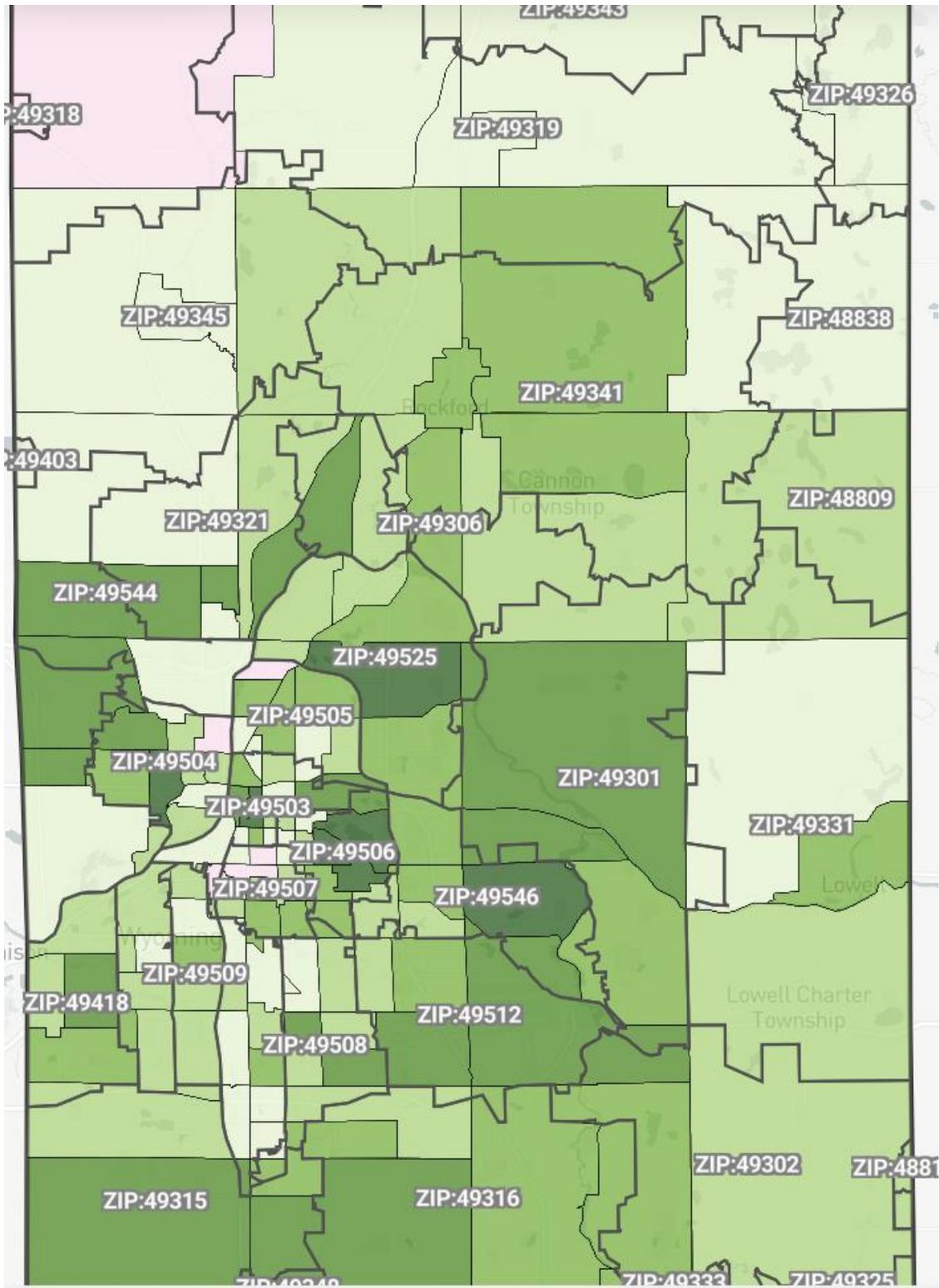
How well informed about COVID & transmission



Approximately half of the participants felt well informed about COVID and about 80% in how COVID was transmitted. However, over 1/3rd of the participants (38%) felt minimally informed about COVID in general.

There has also been considerable discussion in the committee about situations in Black spaces where missed opportunities were observed to inquire or encourage vaccination. Stories have been cited about conversations in barbershops, churches, schools, and funerals where opportunities arose to have direct conversations, but leaders in the conversation potentially not recognizing the opportunity, or not knowing how to engage the opportunity.

5. The clear need for access and education leads to the strategies that would create vaccine access where Black people live. For the access to be successful, it must be accompanied by directed scheduling efforts to create a pipeline for those sites, as well as training for leaders in Black spaces to feel comfortable inquiring, providing facts, and recognizing opportunities for discussions about vaccination.



Map indicated census tracts in Grand Rapids where the shades of green represent over 50%, where the darker the shade the closer to 100%. Shades of pink demonstrate less than 50% vaccination.

Strategy II Case for Support. Community-informed plan to engage Black 18-29 year olds

The following provides the case for why decisions were reached on both 1) engaging with Black young adults aged 18-29, and 2) also creating strong vaccination access, recruiting, and education where a high density of Black people live.

1. A Case for Strategy I: Focusing on Increasing Vaccination Rates among Those Aged 18-29 in Kent County
2. Of those aged 18+, COVID-19 vaccination rates are lowest among 18-29 year olds in Kent County (see chart below).
3. Of those aged 16-19 and 20-29, rates of full vaccination (completely vaccinated) are lowest among Blacks.

16-19 = 28.7% (other races and ethnicities range from 44.62% {Hispanic/Latinx} to 70.41% {American Indian/Alaska Native}). 20-29 = 25.68% (other races and ethnicities range from 37.12% {Hispanic/Latinx} to 73.68% {American Indian/Alaska Native})

Source: Michigan.gov COVID-19 Vaccine Dashboard Dataset updated on September 21, 2021 - https://www.michigan.gov/documents/coronavirus/Ethnicity-Race_Coverage_by_County-20210820_733398_7.xlsx

4. Since July 2021, COVID-19 cases per million in Kent County have been highest among Blacks. Moreover, in the beginning of September, average daily cases were highest among 20-29 years olds in Michigan. (see charts below)
5. Hence, Blacks aged 18-29 are the least vaccinated cohort in Kent County and are currently experiencing an uptick in cases given the transmissibility and viral load of the Delta variant. This group as a whole may be very susceptible to potential new variants.

Our young adults are our future, and this situation puts them and the common good in a vulnerable position.

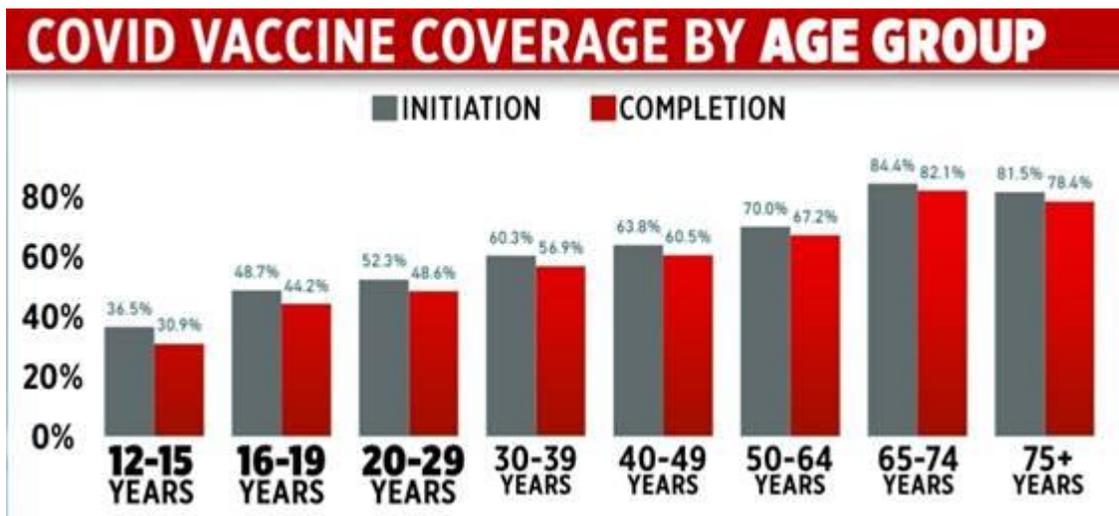
6. What is (are) the root cause(s) of 18-29 year old Blacks possessing the lowest vaccination rate among all 18+ in Kent County? Obviously, efforts to engage this cohort hitherto have been largely ineffective. We need to learn why from this cohort, and only they possess the solutions / way forward.

7. Like every generation, Gen Z and late Millennial Blacks are unique. Many persons do not always understand, appreciate, and consider this distinctiveness.
 - [America's Black Gen Z: Proud, Driven, and Changing the Narrative : ViacomCBS Global Insights](#)
 - [Why Gen Z Isn't Interested in Your Statements, Promises and Commitments -- Yet \(morningconsult.com\)](#)
 - [1 in 6 Gen Z adults are LGBT, Gallup survey shows. And this number could continue to grow. - The Washington Post](#)
 - [From TikTok to Black Lives Matter, how Gen Z is revolutionizing activism - CBS News](#)
 - [Black Millennials and Gen Z Becoming More Cynical Toward C..... | News & Reporting | Christianity Today](#)
 - [Generation Z: Who They Are, in Their Own Words - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)

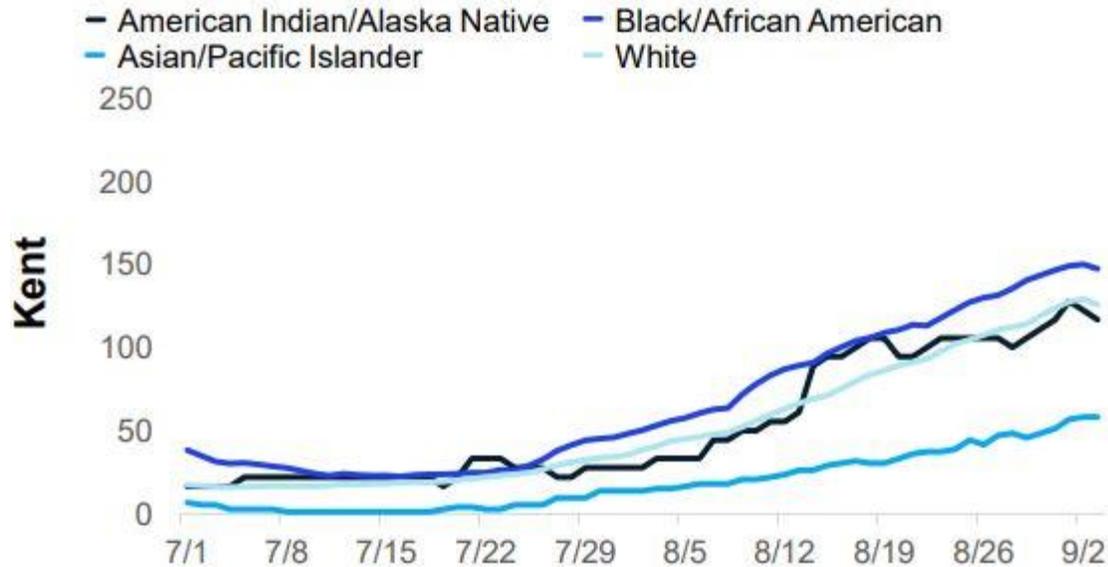
8. Especially since the 1960s, younger persons have had an influential effect on those younger and older than they (younger siblings/relatives and parents/grandparents/relatives)—Civil Rights, LGBTQ+ inclusivity, music, changing mores, etc. If vaccination rates among 18-29 year olds increase, hypothetically rates among other groups should as well.

9. There has been substantial research on the influential impact of Blacks on culture, style, etc. You can find articles on "How Black Americans have shaped cool globally." Hypothetically, if vaccination rates increase among Blacks aged 18-29, rates among all other 18-29 years olds likely will increase as well.

10. Hence, for so many reasons, focusing on increasing vaccinations among 18-29 year old Blacks will further their health and well-being and will likely further the vaccination rates of other Blacks and all other persons in Kent County.



Daily new confirmed and probable cases per million (30-day rolling average) by race category



Number of Cases and Case Rates are Increasing for Most Age Groups

Daily new confirmed and probable cases per million by age group (7-day rolling average)

Age Group	Average† daily cases	Average† Daily Case Rate	One Week % Change (Δ #)
0-9	147.3	127.8	28% (+32)
10-19	210.9	168.0	8% (+15)
20-29	300.0	217.5	9% (+24)
30-39	278.1	229.3	7% (+18)
40-49	218.4	185.2	5% (+10)
50-59	224.9	166.5	13% (+27)
60-69	163.7	128.3	5% (+7)
70-79	97.0	126.5	14% (-12)
80+	42.1	101.7	1% (+1-5)
Total¶	1694.6	169.2	12% (+150)

† Rolling 7-day average; ¶ Total may not reflect state due to missing age data
 Note: Case information sourced from MDHHS and reflects date of onset of symptoms
 Source: MDHHS – Michigan Disease Surveillance System
 Data through 9/3/2021

- Largest one-week growth among those under 10 years of age
- Average daily number of cases (300.0) is highest for those aged 20-29
- Avg. daily case rate (229.3 cases/mil) is currently highest for 30-39
- Case rates for all age groups are between 100-230 cases per million
- Case rate trends are increasing for all age groups
- Case rates bottomed out on June 26, 2021