



Testing and Contact-Tracing COVID-19 Infections in Communities of Color in New York State

NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK (April 26, 2020) — In response to Governor Andrew M. Cuomo’s announcement this week regarding increasing COVID-19 testing and contact tracing, the New York state chapters of the National Black Nurses Association (NBNA), the largest association of professional Black nurses in the country across all specialties, and the New York City and Westchester chapters of the National Association of Hispanic Nurses (NAHN-NY and NAHN-W), the nation’s leading professional society for Latino nurses, today called for policymakers to take immediate actions to address the COVID-19 testing and contact tracing needs of Black and Latino communities in New York State. This is based on multiple data sources (including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the New York City Department of Health) that have documented disproportionately high infection rates, hospitalization rates and death rates among Black and Latino populations from COVID-19. With over 263,000 cases and over 15,700 deaths, New York, continues to be the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States. In New York City the African-American and Latino COVID-19 death rates are twice as high as the White death rate.

“The high Black and Latino death rates are only one example of the overall disproportionate impact COVID-19 has had on these communities and is a direct result of health disparities which are related to social determinants of health and structural racism”, stated Julius Johnson, DNP, RN, FNP-BC, the President of the Greater New York City – Black Nurses Association chapter. *“The key to eventually re-opening hard hit Black and Latino communities is implementing a*

robust testing and contact tracing program that directly involves Black and Latino healthcare providers with the cultural expertise to execute such a program,” said Michele Crespo-Fierro, PhD, MPH, RN, AACRN, the President of the New York City Chapter of the National Association of Hispanic Nurses. Mirian Zavala, DNS, RN, President of the Westchester Chapter of the National Association of Hispanic Nurses further added, *“The program should be culturally and linguistically appropriate.”*

The New York State chapters of the National Black Nurses Association and the New York City and the Westchester chapters of the National Association of Hispanic Nurses therefore call on policymakers to adopt our three recommendations:

Ensure that any COVID-19 testing and contact tracing program in New York State appropriately targets disproportionately affected Black and Latino communities.

It is vitally important that any COVID-19 testing and contact tracing program in the state of New York address the immediate needs of Black and Latino communities most affected and where large numbers of essential workers live (including minority healthcare workers). This is especially important as discussions about re-opening businesses in highly impacted minority communities are underway. Any plan to re-open these communities will need to be built on access to testing and contact tracing programs that will provide accurate, essential and timely testing results to monitor for any increases in the rates of COVID-19. There also needs to be an adequate number of testing sites opened throughout the state and they must be fully accessible, especially in terms of location, extended hours and representative staffing.

Ensure that any COVID-19 testing and contact tracing program in New York State is set up in accordance with sound cultural competency standards.

Health research literature widely supports the creation and implementation of culturally competent care programs as a means to help improve health outcomes and quality of care, while helping to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities. Hence, any COVID-19 testing and contact tracing program established in New York State will be more effective if developed using proven culturally responsive/inclusive standards. Such a program can be developed in consultation with Black and Latino healthcare content experts such as the nurses available within NBNA and NAHN. The World Health Organization (WHO) has

designated 2020 as the “International Year of the Nurse and Midwife” underscoring the fact that they are often the first and only point of care in their communities around the world. This most trusted of all the healthcare professions is uniquely positioned to leverage themselves in helping to develop a COVID-19 testing and contact tracing program in New York that is culturally respectful and maximally effective.

Provide adequate COVID-19 health literacy services tailored to the needs of Black and Latino communities with a focus on testing and contact tracing services.

Any COVID-19 testing and contact tracing program would be greatly enhanced and more effective if implemented alongside comprehensive educational health literacy services. These services would assist in helping to educate highly at risk minority communities on their risk for COVID-19 including routes of transmission, and symptoms, along with ways to protect themselves and avoid spreading the virus. These essential health literacy services should be tailored to the specific learning needs of Black and Latino communities including having educational materials available in Spanish. Evidence shows that these services are also best delivered by trusted members of these communities such as the NBNA and NAHN nurses who live, learn, work, and play in the very same affected communities. Ensuring access to appropriate health education services on COVID-19 that include the necessity and benefits of testing and contact tracing programs will ultimately decrease the risk of adverse outcomes from COVID-19 infection, especially in the communities of color most impacted.

The National Black Nurses Association (NBNA) was organized in 1971 by the late Dr. Lauranne Sams, Dean and Professor of Nursing, School of Nursing, Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, Alabama. NBNA is a non-profit organization incorporated on September 2, 1972 in Ohio and represents 300,000 African American registered nurses, licensed vocational/practical nurses, nursing students and retired nurses from the USA, Eastern Caribbean and Africa, with 114 chartered chapters, in 35 states.

There are four chartered chapters of NBNA in New York:

- Greater New York City – Black Nurses Association, Inc.
- New York Black Nurses Association, Inc.
- Rochester Black Nurses Association, Inc.
- Suffolk County Black Nurses Association, Inc.

Visit NBNA at: <https://www.nbna.org/>

The National Association of Hispanic Nurses™ (NAHN™) was founded in 1975 by Ildaura Murillo-Rohde, PhD, RN, ND, FAAN, then Associate Dean of the School of Nursing at the University of Washington at Seattle, and a core group of nurses who identified the need for an association to address the concerns of Hispanic nurses. Since 1975, NAHN has been the nation’s leading professional society for Latino nurses. With a growing membership in 47 local chapters, NAHN, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, represents the voices of Latino nurses in our country.

There are two chartered chapters of NAHN in New York:

- New York City Chapter – NAHN
- Westchester Chapter - NAHN

Visit NAHN at: <https://www.nahnnet.org/>

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