



POSITION PAPER / JULY 2020

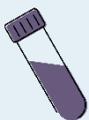
# A Call for Community-Based Testing

In collaboration with [Reverend Dr. Jesse Williams](#), Senior Pastor at Convent Avenue Baptist Church in New York City, and [Northwell Health](#), New York's largest healthcare provider.

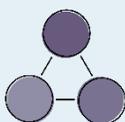
## Stop the Spread Key Takeaways



Stop the Spread is engaging community- and faith-based organizations to replicate hyperlocal, accessible public health models across the country.



Community-based testing is essential to ensure equitable access to COVID-19 tests for underserved communities and communities of color.



Deploying community-based models will require extensive buy-in and cooperation between government entities, healthcare organizations, and community partners.

# State of Play: What's The Latest

Underserved communities and communities of color in the U.S. lack sufficient access to COVID-19 testing. An analysis of [testing locations](#) in Texas revealed that four of the six largest cities in Texas had a disproportionate number of sites in predominantly white neighborhoods. Further, members of underserved communities are more likely to be [uninsured](#), which limits their ability to pay for testing, and more likely to be [essential workers](#), which exposes them to greater risk.

Inequitable access to public health resources is a critical contributor to the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable communities. Of 49 states and territories reporting [racial data](#) on cases, 36 show higher infection rates in communities of color relative to their percentage of the population. Additionally, black individuals are dying at a [2.5x higher](#) rate than white individuals. Black Americans on Medicare are hospitalized at a [4x higher](#) rate than their white counterparts. New testing approaches focusing on access and distribution are essential to accurately track and prevent the spread of infections and to bridge the outcome gap in underserved populations.

## The Big Picture: Why It Matters, What Might Be Next?

Community-based testing models ensure equal access by meeting individuals and families where they are. In these models, local organizations partner with health officials to offer testing out of a physical space in the community. Community-based testing is more successful than approaches relying on a commercial location (e.g., drive-thru site at major retailer) in reaching underserved populations and populations of color for several reasons:

- **Trust:** Individuals are more likely to get tested if they hear about it from a trusted community member (e.g., pastor) and if it is conducted in a place where they are comfortable (e.g., church). Communities of color may [mistrust](#) the government and major health institutions that have [historically oppressed](#) them or exposed them to racism.
- **Accessibility:** Underserved individuals are [less likely](#) to own a car and may face transportation barriers to testing. Walk-in community spaces are significantly easier to get to.
- **Outreach:** Community leaders can leverage a variety of outreach channels including hyper-local signage, social media, and word-of-mouth. Compared to city-wide campaigns, these [culturally competent](#) approaches are more effective at reaching underserved groups.

State-led public private partnerships are critical to scaling community-based testing models, which require a diverse set of players to be successful. Community partners sit at the nexus of these models by providing safe testing locations and leading outreach. Healthcare organizations must provide PPE, testing equipment, testing technicians, and medical follow-ups. A government player is essential to identify the areas of unmet need, then provide funding, oversight, contact tracing, and translators.



In May, Reverend Jesse Williams led a successful community-based testing program out of the Convent Avenue Baptist church in New York, a member of the broader Baptist Ministers Conference of Greater New York and Vicinity

church system. Rev. Williams was recruited by Governor Cuomo’s office to participate in a state-wide testing program alongside 60 other houses of worship. Northwell Health, New York’s largest healthcare network, partnered with the Governor’s office and the faith-based community to administer the tests in collaboration with the faith-based leaders. The church alternated antibody and diagnostic tests over 5 days to ultimately test ~1,500 people. Below are several best practices collected from the program:

- **Communicate logistics:** Outreach materials should proactively address testing concerns, such as the cost or need for a referral. To ensure equitable access, the best practice is to offer free testing that does not require a referral. All communications should be culturally and literacy appropriate, and community outreach will require intentional recruitment of trust community leaders and an omni-channel approach.
- **Prioritize safety:** Sites need to establish workflows that maintain social distancing during testing (e.g., dots on the floor, separate entrances and exits), as well as allow for regularly-scheduled time to disinfect the space. Several days of lead time is required to arrange a space and train staff and volunteers.
- **Follow-up:** Mechanisms to communicate a diagnosis, refer patients to medical care, and contact trace are essential. Community members will respond best to a local, culturally competent voice.

## Potential Impact For Your Organization / The Questions We’re Asking

### Community Organizations

- For organizations interested in standing up community-based testing programs, can you identify a contact in your local government to reach out to for funding and logistics support?

- How do you think about designing an outreach approach that will resonate best with your community?

### Philanthropists and Investors

- How can you deploy resources and capital on a local scale to bridge the gap in testing access for underserved communities or communities of color?
- How can you start conversations with your network, including political leaders, corporations, and nonprofits to highlight the importance of community-based testing?

### Government Organizations

- How can governments develop a clear picture of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic testing inequity to identify where community-based testing should be deployed?
- How can governments design a repeatable, scalable model for community-based testing that offers both financial and operational support to local partners and healthcare organizations?

### What STS Is Doing About It

- Stop the Spread is making connections with community-based organizations, such as the [Pandemic Response Network](#), to increase access to COVID-19 resources in underserved communities.
- In partnership with ImpactAssets, Stop the Spread is [raising capital](#) that is being deployed to promising, high-impact solutions like [Community Purchasing Alliance](#).

### Learn More: Other Experts And Sources

- Sutter Health: [Disparity in Outcomes Among COVID-19 Patients in a Large Healthcare System in California](#)
- Project Baseline: [COVID Community Based Testing](#)
- Direct Relief: [Making COVID-19 Testing Equitable by Making it Accessible to Vulnerable Communities](#)

### About The ImpactAssets Stop the Spread COVID Response Program

ImpactAssets and Stop the Spread have joined forces to connect and catalyze the private and public sector response to COVID-19. The Program brings together ImpactAssets’ leading impact investment and organizational capacity and Stop the Spread’s agile partnership model. This partnership builds off Stop the Spread’s existing community of 1,300+ CEOs and Executives, volunteers, subject-matter experts and investment pipeline of 400+ promising COVID initiatives.