

**MICHIGAN**

# Michigan unveils new plan to improve sickle cell care

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The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services [has announced a new plan](#) to improve services for people living with sickle cell disease, focused on raising awareness and expanding access to care and therapies.

Sickle cell, an inherited hemoglobin disorder that is one of the most prevalent genetic disorders in Michigan, affects about 4,000 people in the state. The state's new plan includes six strategic goals, including ensuring access to high-quality, integrated treatment and support services statewide; providing continuous education to increase awareness of best practices; and utilizing standards of care and protocols that improve patient outcomes.

“MDHHS is committed to improving care, support, education and health outcomes for individuals living with sickle cell disease,” said Elizabeth Hertel, MDHHS director. “This strategic plan reflects the voices of the sickle cell community and outlines actions to expand access to care, strengthen data and continue advancing support for those impacted across Michigan.”

Sickle cell disease causes red blood cells to form a sickle or crescent shape, blocking blood flow and causing complications such as pain, serious infections, strokes, and organ damage. It most commonly impacts people of African descent, though it also impacts people with Middle Eastern, South Asian, Hispanic and Mediterranean backgrounds.

**More:** ['Effective' gene therapies for sickle cell disease spur cautious hope in Michigan patients](#)

The state's new strategic plan is set to run from 2026 to 2030. It builds upon the foundation laid by the 2015 strategic plan.

The plan will use data from the the Michigan Sickle Cell Data Collection (MiSCDC) program to guide improvements, according to the state.

“Data is vital to closing gaps, improving outcomes and supporting individuals with sickle cell disease throughout their lives,” said Dr. Sarah Reeves, principal investigator of the MiSCDC Program. “MiSCDC leverages data and partnerships to inform policy to ensure that people with SCD get the care they need, when they need it.”

Sickle cell disease affects roughly 100,000 people in the United States and more than 4,000 in Michigan. Most individuals living with the disease in the United States are Black, and it affects one in every 365 Black births, [according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

Its roots can be traced to the transatlantic slave trade when millions of enslaved Africans who carried the trait were brought to the United States against their will. The mutation arose in Africa because it protects against malaria infection.

Most people with sickle cell disease in Michigan live in the southeast portion of the state. [More than 1,000 live in Wayne County](#), which is home to Detroit, one of the nation's largest majority Black cities.

The estimated life expectancy of those with sickle cell is more than 20 years shorter than the average expectancy and many people with the disease do not receive the recommended healthcare screenings and treatments, according to the CDC.

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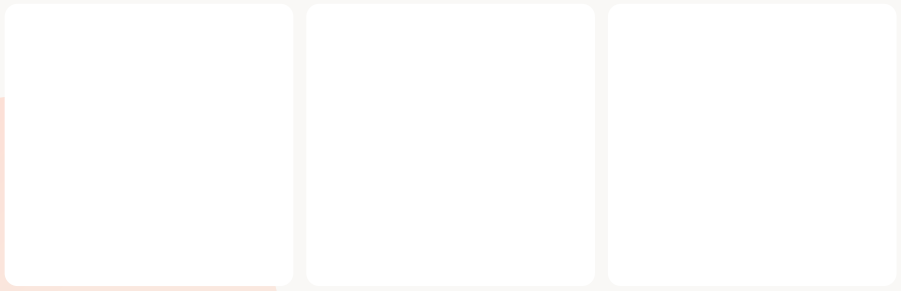
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