

Proposed Grant Application: Building Trust in Public Health's Fight To Prevent Disease Outbreaks With Vaccines And Other Tools

Organization Name: Southern Alliance for Public Health Leadership (SAPHL)

Grant Request Amount: \$10,000

Proposal Title: Building Trust in Public Health around Disease Outbreaks and Vaccines

Executive Summary:

The Southern Alliance for Public Health Leadership (SAPHL) seeks a grant of \$10,000 to support its mission of improving public health by increasing immunization rates.¹ The South faces significant threats to public health due to shifting vaccine policies, misinformation, and reduced funding for immunization programs. These challenges disproportionately impact marginalized communities, exacerbate health disparities, and lead to preventable disease outbreaks - even in counties that may have an overall high vaccination rate. Through collaboration, education, and advocacy, SAPHL will help build the infrastructure needed to safeguard communities from preventable disease and worsening health disparities.

Federal resources, communications, and public health workforce are shrinking. SAPHL and its coalition of state and local health leaders will apply this \$10,000 grant to the development of materials that support social service, non-profit, faith-based, health-care or other community organizations, to the training and education of such entities on the use of these materials and to helping them identify trusted messengers to deliver the material's messages, and to the preparation of an overall playbook that can be used in other urban areas throughout the South. SAPHL will also leverage the knowledge from the significant public health workforce in DeKalb county that often works nationally or globally. These materials will help raise awareness around vaccines across DeKalb county. We will employ the significant vaccine education expertise of our team as well as a well-established, evidence based methodology in our work.

Background and Need:

In recent years, vaccine policies in the Southern U.S. have come under increasing pressure. State-level rollbacks, federal uncertainty, and the growing spread of vaccine misinformation are putting public health at risk, particularly in already underserved communities. These changes are creating barriers to immunization access, undermining trust in vaccines, and leading to higher rates of preventable disease outbreaks in the region.

In the state of Georgia and in DeKalb county, vaccination rates are in many cases below the national rate. In 2021, 79.1% of toddlers across the US had received the DTaP vaccine and 90.6% of toddlers had received the MMR vaccine. In Georgia, 70.9% of this group received the DTaP

¹ SAPHL's mission also includes other public health goals. See [SAPHL.org](https://saphl.org) for more.

vaccine and 83.2% received the MMR vaccine.² In order for the DTaP or the MMR to confer community immunity, vaccination rates would need to be much higher (see table below). That makes the likelihood of an outbreak even more likely.

	IPV	PCV	HepB	VAR	MMR	Hib	DTaP	Rota	7 Series	Hep A
CIT ³	80% ⁴			82% ⁵	92-94% ⁶		92-94% ⁷	7.5% ⁸		80% ⁹
GA	90.7%	90.4%	89.3%	88.1%	87.8%	85.8%	79.4%	75%	74.9%	67.1%
DeKalb	90.7%	90.6%	90.1%	88.4%	88.2%	86%	79.8%	76.1%	76%	68.2%

Hard to identify clusters of unvaccinated groups can also significantly raise the risk of an outbreak.¹⁰ This is all too obvious in places like Gaines County, TX, where there have now been 223 cases with spread into New Mexico and Oklahoma.¹¹ 82% of students in Gaines County have received the MMR - only 6 percentage points different from DeKalb County. However, one school district in the county had a vaccination rate of 46%.¹²

² AAP, "The State of Georgia's Child Vaccination Rates" <https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/Vaccine/index.html>

³ Community Immunity Threshold

⁴ Irene Papanicolas, Robert A. Berenson, Laura Skopec "Boosting Childhood Vaccination Rates Post-Pandemic: Lessons from Five Countries" <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2024/oct/boosting-childhood-vaccination-rates-post-pandemic-lessons-five-countries>

⁵ Taeyong Lee, Jiyeon Suh, Jae-Ki Choi, Jeehyun Lee, Sun Hee Park "Estimating the basic reproductive number of varicella in South Korea incorporating social contact patterns and seroprevalence" <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8475589/>

⁶ AAP, "Measles Vaccine" <https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/measles/measles-vaccine/>

⁷ T Roice Fulton, Varun K Phadke, Walter A Orenstein, Alan R Hinman, Wayne D Johnson, Saad B Omer "Protective Effect of Contemporary Pertussis Vaccines: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis" <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4826451/>

⁸ Thea K. Fischer et. al. "Protective Immunity after Natural Rotavirus Infection: A Community Cohort Study of Newborn Children in Guinea-Bissau, West Africa" <https://academic.oup.com/jid/article-abstract/186/5/593/2191062?redirectedFrom=fulltext#:~:text=A%20primary%20infection%20conferred%20052%%20>

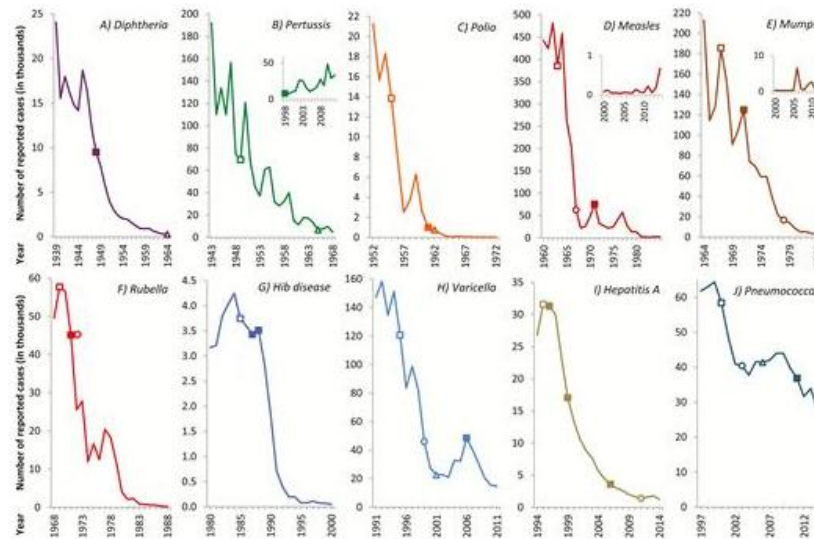
⁹ Yang, et. al. "Determining Herd Immunity Thresholds for Hepatitis A Virus Transmission to Inform Vaccination Strategies Among People Who Inject Drugs in 16 US States" <https://academic.oup.com/cid/article/78/4/976/7280117>

¹⁰ Moon, Morathe, Vullikanti. "Are all underimmunized measles clusters equally critical?" <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10427811/>

¹¹ Emily Brindley. "Texas measles cases rise to 223, but no new counties included in outbreak" <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/texas/2025/03/11/texas-measles-cases-rise-to-223-but-no-new-counties-included-in-outbreak/>

¹² Jonathan Corum and Teddy Rosenbluth. "Where U.S. Measles Outbreaks Are Spreading" <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/health/measles-outbreak-map.html>

But even without hitting that threshold - each additional vaccination helps minimize the number of potential cases. The graph below shows the introduction of the common pediatric vaccines from inception through the first 20 years of use.¹³



On top of the challenges around already declining immunization rates, there are federal changes on the horizon that will make vaccine education and access more challenging:

- Federal funding cuts to critical vaccine programs (e.g., VFC and Section 317 grants).
- A weakening of vaccine requirements in schools and healthcare settings.
- Increases in misinformation from traditional reliable sources around vaccines.
- Reduced funding and emphasis from the federal government on vaccine education campaigns.

SAPHL recognizes the urgent need for coordinated efforts to foster greater vaccine education in programs that interface with residents who have unvaccinated children. Without action, DeKalb county - along with much of the south - will face escalating health crises, including higher rates of communicable diseases, increased healthcare costs, and worsening racial and economic health disparities.

SAPHL will create vaccine materials based on a tried and true method for increasing vaccine uptake in DeKalb county that is “evidence-based, context-specific and culturally appropriate and tailored to the individual’s position on the vaccine hesitancy continuum.”¹⁴ SAPHL will develop

¹³ Evan J. Anderson et. al. “Protecting the Community Through Child Vaccination”
<https://academic.oup.com/cid/article/67/3/464/4868144>

¹⁴ Tuckerman, Kaufman, Danchin, “Effective Approaches to Combat Vaccine Hesitancy”
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8997018/#sec1>

effective materials and resources for messaging to clients who are served by non-profit, social service, and health care organizations. We will also work with these organizations in being effective trusted messengers. These materials, sessions, and trainings will help create a playbook for other urban areas in the South.

Objectives:

The proposed project will focus on the following key objectives:

1. **Increase Public Awareness and Education:** Develop and distribute educational materials that can be effective tools for vaccine education. These materials will be compiled into a playbook that can be used in other metro areas across the South.
 2. **Build and Mobilize Coalitions:** Create a network of non-profit, faith-based, social service, and healthcare organizations to drive collective action on immunization education.
 3. **Training on Effective Narrative:** Provide training on using effective narrative to help service providers be more effective vaccine educators.
 4. **Connecting Vaccine Partners with Community:** Create opportunities for connecting
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Project Strategy:

With this \$10,000 grant, SAPHL will implement the following strategies:

1. **Identifying Gaps:** SAPHL will work with local stakeholders to identify where the resources/material gaps and needs are around vaccine education.
2. **SAPHL Engagement and Education Sessions:** SAPHL will hold three sessions to engage with public health partners and experts to analyze the current immunization landscape, identifying potential shifts and threats, and collect ideas on the most effective messaging. This will include research on history, the identification of key players, and forecasting potential changes.
3. **SAPHL Training Session:** SAPHL will hold one training session on using public narrative to demonstrate how service providers can use narrative as an effective tool for public health education.
4. **Published Playbook:** SAPHL will provide a final playbook that provides a set of recommendations on the best ways non-profit, social service and health care organizations could encourage residents to make an informed decision about vaccines and increase vaccination rates.
5. **Coordinated Vaccine Events:** SAPHL will work with partners to connect participating provider/health care organizations to community partners who could host events.

Impact and Evaluation:

The success of this project will be measured by:

- **Increased Knowledge and Awareness:** The number of organizations and individuals participating in sessions.
- **Coalition Growth:** The number of new members and allies that join SAPHL meetings.
- **Published Playbook:** SAPHL will provide a final playbook that provides a set of recommendations and materials on the best ways for non-profit, social service and health care organizations to encourage residents to make an informed decision about vaccines and increase vaccination rates.
- **Training:** Provide public health professionals with the tools to be effective storytellers around why vaccines are important.
- **Events:** Qualitative reporting on any events that result from coordinating between providers and community partners.

Budget Justification:

The \$10,000 grant will be used as follows:

1. **Education and Outreach Materials:** \$3,000
 - a. Design and production and distribution of playbook and digital content.
2. **Instructor/Facilitator for Training:** \$4,000
 - a. Travel and logistical expenses for meetings with policymakers.
 - b. Development of advocacy toolkits and outreach campaigns.
3. **Coalition Building and Convening:** \$2,000
 - a. Costs associated with organizing virtual and in-person coalition meetings and events.
4. **Outreach:** \$1,000
 - a. Social media advertisements, digital campaigns, and community outreach materials.

Conclusion:

The Southern Alliance for Public Health Leadership (SAPHL) is committed to protecting public health in the Southern U.S. by ensuring access to life-saving vaccines. With the support of this \$10,000 grant, SAPHL will mobilize to address gaps in public health infrastructure, educate communities, and advocate for policies that protect vaccine access and promote healthier outcomes. Through collaborative efforts, SAPHL will help ensure that DeKalb County remains

resilient in the face of ongoing public health challenges, safeguarding the health of all its residents.

Contact Information:

- **Name:** Scott Thorpe
 - **Title:** Executive Director
 - **Organization:** Southern Alliance for Public Health Leadership (SAPHL)
 - **Email:** scott@saphl.org
 - **Phone:** 404-276-0893
 - **Website:** www.saphl.org
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We appreciate your consideration of our proposal and look forward to the opportunity to make a meaningful impact in DeKalb county.