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Center for  
**Sustainable Health Care**  
*Quality and Equity*

# DRIVING Equity in Colorectal Cancer Screening

CANCER  
SHIFTING

STAGE  
INITIATIVE

# Establishing Colorectal Cancer Community Interventions

Cancer Stage Shifting Initiative × SHC

## The Center for Sustainable Health Care Quality and Equity (SHC)

The SHC team at NMQF launched a quality improvement and clinical education (QIE) and community engagement program to address health inequities in colorectal cancer (CRC) across five high-burden geographic areas. Using the NMQF Colorectal Cancer Index and colorectal cancer data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the team identified and prioritized Houston, TX; Chicago, IL; Birmingham, AL; Queens, NY; and Prince George's County, MD—regions with significant colorectal cancer disparities among historically excluded populations.



**Faith Health Alliance (FHA)** collaboration and educational materials. The FHA is a network of 25 Black-led, protestant churches across the U.S. Each church and their leadership serve as public health beacons for their congregants and in their communities. They may participate in disseminating public health education and information, hosting screening fairs, and/or inviting trusted practitioners to assist in educating their congregations.



**HAIR Wellness Warriors** collaboration and educational materials. The HAIR Wellness Warriors program is an expansion of the Health Advocates in Reach and Research (HAIR) program that began at the University of Maryland over one decade ago under the leadership of Dr. Stephen B. Thomas. The program positions barbers and stylists and community health ambassadors and public health champions in their communities and for their clients. Their barbershops and salons serve as public health hubs



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# Colorectal Cancer Community Interventions and Quality Improvement Projects

Cancer Stage Shifting Initiative x SHC

## Overall Goal:

- Increase awareness of colorectal cancer screening.
- Enhance education about screening options and benefits.
- Improve screening rates in minoritized communities.

## Quality Improvement:

- On February 12, 2023, SHC convened a one-time advisory board meeting with experts across sectors to inform and guide its colorectal cancer (CRC) quality improvement and education efforts. The meeting identified key disparities, barriers, and gaps in CRC screening related to age, race/ethnicity, and family history. Recommendations emphasized the need for culturally competent education models, patient-centered care, and training for medical professionals to break the cycle of disparities. Insights from this discussion directly shaped the development of the CRC QIE toolkit.
- The DRIVE toolkit is a sustainable framework that integrates quality improvement strategies with community engagement to enhance health outcomes and advance health equity. Activities include developing patient intake forms to identify eligible candidates for colorectal cancer screening, delivering comprehensive education on screening, tailoring educational tools, and offering incentives such as gift cards to encourage participation. By addressing barriers and disparities for minoritized communities, DRIVE ensures lasting impact and improved access to care.

## Community Partnerships:

- Trusted community partners in each city provided education and resources in partnership with their local clinical partner.



# Launching Colorectal Cancer Community Interventions and Quality Improvement Projects

Cancer Stage Shifting Initiative x SHC

## Quality Improvement Projects

Houston, TX  
Birmingham, AL  
Chicago, IL  
Queens, NY  
Prince George's County, MD

## Community Partners



FAITH HEALTH ALLIANCE



HAIR WELLNESS WARRIOR



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# Resources for Clinicians and Community Partners

Cancer Stage Shifting Initiative x SHC



## DRIVE [Demonstrating Real Improvement in Value and Equity] Toolkit

SHC created and disseminated the **DRIVING Equity in Colorectal Cancer Screening** toolkit to help primary care clinicians better understand the importance of providing equitable screening and referrals for CRC screening. This toolkit provides information about the disparity challenges, resources to learn more and walks clinicians through the Plan-Do-Study-Act process to identify and implement opportunities for growth in their workflows. commitment.

## Communications Toolkit

Additionally, the Faith Health Alliance and HAIR Wellness Warrior participants were given a **Health Champions toolkit** to support them in their community engagement efforts. The toolkit includes background information about CRC, talking points to engage in conversation with the community and printable resources that the community partners can hand out when engaging in conversation about CRC.

**ABOUT COLORECTAL CANCER**

**What is colorectal cancer?**  
Colorectal cancer is a disease in which cells in the colon or rectum grow out of control.

Colorectal cancer typically develops from **precancerous polyps** or abnormal growths. Screening tests can find precancerous polyps, so that doctors can remove them before they become cancerous.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

The **estimated** deaths from colorectal cancer in 2023 will be **52,550**.

# Quality Improvement Projects

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## HOUSTON, TX: KELSEY-SEYBOLD CLINIC (KSC)

<b>QI Activity</b>	<p>KSC implemented an outreach campaign in both English and Spanish, focusing on FIT tests, Cologuard, and colonoscopies.</p>
<b>Implementation Plan</b>	<p>The outreach campaign was a collaborative effort involving the disease management team, which included administration, physicians, and health plans. Patients received outreach messages and were followed up with to schedule their screenings. KSC reported their results to the medical standards committee, with each physician receiving their CRC screening scores. The DRIVE toolkit was shared in a staff newsletter, and KSC began prescribing Cologuard in 2023.</p>
<b>Supporting Activities</b>	<p>KSC also supported an educational event for the HAIR Wellness Warriors, further promoting CRC awareness and screening.</p>
<b>Results</b>	<p>110,633 patients total screened</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6% Increase in screening rates among Non-Hispanic Black/African American patients</li> <li>• 6% Increase in screening rates among the 45-49 year age group</li> <li>• 31% Increase in Cologuard use</li> </ul>

## BIRMINGHAM, AL: ECURE HEALTH AND WELLNESS

<b>QI Activity</b>	<p>The eCure clinic implemented a new patient intake form to identify individuals eligible for colorectal cancer (CRC) screening at check-in. All patients received CRC education as part of the visit.</p>
<b>Implementation Plan</b>	<p>If the patient had an established primary care provider (PCP), they received CRC education and screening recommendations for follow-up with their PCP. For patients without a PCP, CRC education was provided, and they were directed to appropriate screening options. Patients screened through the clinic utilized either FIT tests or Cologuard, while those needing a colonoscopy were referred to a GI specialist.</p>
<b>Supporting Activities</b>	<p>The eCure clinic partnered with the Payne Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church to support their Health is Wealth event. Cologuard prescriptions began at the start of this program. Prior to the program, the clinic did not track CRC screening rates and did not have a formal protocol or flowchart for screening. The program ran from September-December 2023.</p>
<b>Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 278 patients were screened during the project period, with 68% identifying as Black/African American</li> <li>• 24% completed Cologuard (stool DNA) screening</li> <li>• Cologuard was not used at all prior to the program (0%)</li> <li>• 32% underwent colonoscopy</li> </ul>

## CHICAGO, IL: RUSH UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

QI Activity	Evaluated colorectal cancer screening rates at two Rush primary care clinics (Rush University Internists - RUI, and Rush West Loop - RWL) across racial/ethnic demographics. Implemented shared decision-making tools to assist providers in discussing screening with patients. CRC screening utilized included FIT test, Cologuard, and colonoscopy.
Implementation Plan	A shared decision-making tool was introduced in clinic rooms to help providers discuss CRC screening options with patients. Providers were trained on how to use the tool effectively. Based on survey feedback, a “one-pager” was created to support patient education on the available screening options.
Supporting Activities	Rush supported educational events with our FHA and HAIR Wellness Warriors. Their clinical team participated on <a href="#">SHC’s March webinar</a> , which focused on CRC awareness and screening and continues to support programs in 2024. Rush hosted a CRC awareness event and invited the SHC’s community partners to receive other educational and patient navigation education.
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demographics for patients screened (January- April 2024) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ White: 62% → 65% (+3%)</li> <li>◦ Black/African American: 47% → 58% (+11%)</li> <li>◦ Hispanic/Latino: 56% → 55% (-1%, stable)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Screenings increased from 37,838 (2023) to 42,365 (2024)—a 4,527 increase (12%).</li> </ul>

## PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY, MD: LUMINIS HEALTH

QI Activity	Luminis Health created educational material on CRC and its screening options, focused on different literacy levels, with availability in Spanish.	
Implementation Plan	Luminis Health deployed engagement activities including screening postcards, gift card incentives, infographics, colon health brochures, Fit kits, and digestive health displays. All patients are under- or uninsured, and Luminis provides resources to simplify the CRC screening process. They also offer Cologuard kit pick-up at the clinic, with a dedicated staff member to guide patients through the process.	
Supporting Activities	The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square hosted two CRC educational sessions in March 2023, supported by Luminis Health. Following these sessions, congregants were invited to a CRC awareness event where they could connect with patient navigators and engage in hands-on learning with a colon model.	
Results	Program Period (October 2023 – June 2024): Total Screened: 343 ( <i>data reflects up to June 2024</i> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Female: 249</li> <li>• Male: 94</li> <li>• Black/African American: 59 (+18%)</li> <li>• Hispanic/Latino: 273 (-11%)</li> <li>• Minority Screenings: 333 (+31%)</li> </ul>	Pre-Program (2022-2023): Total Screened: 366 ( <i>full year</i> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Female: 255</li> <li>• Male: 111</li> <li>• Black/African American: 50</li> <li>• Hispanic/Latino: 306</li> <li>• Minority Screenings: 254</li> </ul>

## QUEENS, NY: NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS ELMHURST (NYC HH)

<b>QI Activity</b>	<p>Elmhurst launched a comprehensive outreach campaign, emphasizing non-invasive CRC screening methods like iFOBT kits. The campaign included patient education, proactive screening orders, and support for patients to return their kits.</p>
<b>Implementation Plan</b>	<p>The Ambulatory Care adult primary care department, along with an interdisciplinary team, reviewed patient appointments to pre-order iFOBT kits for eligible patients. Educational materials highlighted the importance of starting CRC screenings at age 45. Follow-ups included reminder calls, patient experience hotlines, and incentives to encourage kit returns. The screening process and results were closely monitored through the electronic medical records (EMR), with data shared to promote accountability and improvement among staff.</p>
<b>Supporting Activities</b>	<p>The clinic emphasized reducing health disparities and addressed barriers related to health literacy, cost fears, and discomfort with traditional colonoscopies. The Elmhurst team also led a CRC screening learning session in Spanish at the Our Lady of Sorrows Church.</p>
<b>Results</b>	<p>Total Screening Improvement: 12% increase in screening rates from August 2023 to September 2024 (from 59% to 71%). A total of 11,232 screenings were completed in 2024.</p> <p>iFOBT Screening: 17% increase over the same period</p> <p>Equity Metrics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 13% increase in screening rates among Black/African American patients (51% to 64%)</li> <li>• 22% increase among Hispanic patients (50% to 72%)</li> <li>• 14% increase among White patients (45% to 59%)</li> </ul> <p>Uninsured Population: Achieved a screening rate of 68% by September 2024, ensuring equity across insurance status</p>



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# Clinical Partner Focus Group

SHC gathered the participating clinical partners to gain insights into their colorectal cancer (CRC) screening practices. The focus session explored screening methods, patient barriers such as fear, cost, and transportation, and clinician challenges like colonoscopy backlogs and implicit bias. Participants also shared strategies to address these barriers and efforts to improve CRC screening rates.

## Key Takeaways

### Clinic CRC Screening:

- Colonoscopy is the primary screening method; many clinics also offer FIT and are starting to utilize Cologuard.
- Wait times for colonoscopy range from 1-6 months due to backlogs and staffing shortages.
- Return rates for at-home tests are around 30-40%.

### Barriers:

- Long wait times for colonoscopy demotivate patients; at-home tests have been incorporated, but this change has been slow.
- Transportation issues make it difficult for patients to get to appointments.
- Low literacy and non-English speakers struggle with prep instructions.
- Patients often do not understand the need for screening when asymptomatic.

### Solutions Implemented:

- Patient navigators for follow-up
- Incentives like gift cards
- Educational materials with pictures and videos in multiple languages
- In recent years many have incorporated other screening tools to cut back on wait times for those that need colonoscopies. This has proven to be successful but has been a slow change to incorporate.



# Quality Improvement Takeaways

127,013

Patients Screened

64.1%

of patients screened were from minoritized communities

5 Health Systems

Clinical Focus Group

Hosted focus group with participating health systems

Significant Improvements

in screening rates across all participating health systems

1 Webinar

SHC hosted a webinar highlighting Rush University Medical Center's DRIVE program and its collaboration with a local Faith Health Alliance (FHA) partner. The session reached approximately 100 viewers



WATCH HERE

# Community Partner Events

Cancer Stage Shifting Initiative x SHC

## HAIR WELLNESS WARRIORS

### Houston, TX

- Kim Aitch, Earker Coleman, Kevin Bolivar, and Tiffany Gipson hosted four events in March 2024 titled “Healthy Guts and Curly Cuts,” supported by Exact Sciences and Kelsey Seybold Clinic.
- The programs provided resources and information on various CRC screening options, including lower-cost alternatives and Cologuard demo kits.
- Attendees had the opportunity to ask questions of participating clinicians and share their stories to help normalize conversations about CRC screening.

### Chicago, IL

- In March 2024, Regina Taylor hosted an educational event, “Healthy Cuts and Guts,” supported by Rush University Medical Center.
- The event featured an overview of CRC screening, including symptoms and prevention tips.
- Participants were encouraged to share their testimonials and experiences related to CRC screening.

### Prince George's County, MD

- Richelle Newman hosted “Health for Her,” a women's health event during Women's History Month in March 2024, supported by Exact Sciences.
- The event provided educational resources on various CRC screening options, while Walgreens offered COVID-19 and flu vaccines.

### Pine Bluff, AK

- Dorothy Reynolds hosted a football-themed Homecoming Celebration at Impressive Styles Beauty Salon and Elite Cutz Barber Shop, supported by local health organizations and Walgreens.
- The event offered free influenza vaccinations, health screenings, CRC screening information, and insurance resources.

### Newport News, VA

- Terrie Branch and Justin Young hosted “Voices of Health: Amplifying Wellness in Our Communities”
- “Voices of Health” event provided education on CRC, vaccines (influenza and COVID-19), and overall wellness, featuring healthcare professionals.

### Cincinnati, OH

- Michele Lamb hosted “Strength in Beauty”
- The Hairport Barber & Beauty Studio hosted “Strength in Beauty,” focusing on CRC and breast cancer awareness, providing screening resources and vaccine information.

### Glenside, PA

- Sandra Jenkins hosted “Pathways to Wellness” at La Mott Community Center, organized by Naturalis HAIR.
- The event offered free influenza and COVID-19 vaccines, CRC screening information, and nutrition guidance, with fresh produce provided by Trader Joe's.



# Community Partner Events

Cancer Stage Shifting Initiative x SHC

## FAITH HEALTH ALLIANCE

### Houston, TX - Brentwood Baptist Church

- Hosted the NMQF H-Town: Health Connect event in November 2023, attracting a diverse audience.
- Clinics provided information and resources for various CRC screening options, increasing awareness in the community.
- Attendees were connected to Cologuard screening, enhancing access to preventive services.
- **Impact:** Positive feedback from attendees on the availability of screening resources led to a commitment for future outreach events.

### Queens, NY - Our Lady of Sorrows Church

- Held a CRC screening education session with the Elmhurst Clinic in October 2023.
- The session was conducted in Spanish, fostering strong engagement among congregants.
- The church continues to disseminate resources and materials shared during the event, reinforcing ongoing education about CRC screening.
- **Impact:** Increased awareness and understanding of CRC screening options, with many congregants expressing intent to schedule screenings.

### Birmingham, AL - Payne Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church

- Hosted the “Building Black Wealth Community Day” in November 2023, in partnership with the National Association of Real Estate Brokers, attracting approximately 1,000 attendees.
- The eCure clinic provided education and resources for CRC screening, including direct interactions with health professionals.
- **Impact:** Strong community turnout facilitated meaningful discussions about health disparities, leading to an increase in inquiries about CRC screenings.

### Chicago, IL - New Spiritual Light Missionary Baptist Church

- In February 2024, hosted a CRC educational session with support from Rush University Medical Center.
- Attendees received colonoscopy prep medication and were invited to Rush's March CRC awareness event, featuring patient navigation tools.
- Walgreens provided flu and COVID-19 vaccines, enhancing the overall health services offered.
- In April 2024, a second session was held during a men's ministry event to engage male congregants, addressing previous concerns about low male attendance.
- **Impact:** The sessions resulted in increased screening appointments scheduled, especially among male attendees.



# Community Partners

Cancer Stage Shifting Initiative x SHC

## FAITH HEALTH ALLIANCE

### Prince George's County, MD - The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square

- Hosted two CRC educational sessions in March 2023 during their services, supported by Luminis Health.
- Following these sessions, congregants were invited to Luminis Health's CRC awareness event, where they connected with patient navigators and participated in a hands-on learning experience with a colon model.
- **Impact:** The interactive nature of the events led to heightened engagement and a noticeable increase in screening sign-ups, with participants expressing greater confidence in understanding the screening process.

## Community Partner Impact

25 FHA + 10 HAIR  
Wellness Warriors

~2,220 Attendees

18+ Community  
Partner Events

And other health-related events hosted by FHA churches, where CRC educational resources were shared and distributed

Increased  
Community  
Awareness

for CRC screening and facilitated open discussions about health experiences

Cologuard  
Connections

Enhanced access to screening options

500+

CRC screening and education resources distributed, including Cologuard demonstration kits

Expert Learning Session

Community partners attended a learning session led by a clinical expert. The session covered screening guidelines, disparities, and risks, allowing partners to ask questions and prepare to engage their communities. This session equipped partners to lead conversations on CRC screening and help normalize discussions around colorectal health



# Community Partner Survey

At each community partner event, a survey was available to all participants, gathering information on demographics, screening history, and the event's impact on participants' intent and knowledge regarding CRC screening. The following data reflects the responses of those who completed the survey:

## Demographics

- Majority (96%) respondents were Black/African American
- 54% Male
- Most participants aged 50+

## Screening History

- 71% had been screened before
- Most common screening: Colonoscopy (94%)

## Intent to Get Screened

- 52% of those unscreened plan to schedule screening soon or when eligible

## Increased Likelihood of CRC Screening After Learning from Community Partners

- 75% of participants who had not previously been screened said they are likely to get screened, though some noted they still want more information
- 76% of those previously screened said they are likely to continue with recommended screenings after learning from the community partner



# THANK YOU TO OUR CLINICAL AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS!



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## More Information

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