

White House effort tackles vaccine hesitancy in Black community

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — A CDC survey reveals the estimated vaccine hesitancy is about 14.18 percent. In Jacksonville's Black community it might be even higher.

Pastor Christopher McKee pastors The Church of Oakland on the city's Eastside.

He said vaccine hesitancy is a very real concern.

"There's a lot of misinformation out there, people are reading things on the internet," said McKee.

The CDC reports about a [third of Black Americans](#) refuse to take the vaccine amid concerns about trust, safety and the newness of the vaccines.

Dr. Carol Neil is with the First Coast Black Nurses Association and believes ignorance is to blame for the hesitancy.

"Don't be on your death bed begging for the vaccine when you can get it now," said Neil.

Several months ago, the White House launched its Shots at the Shop initiative in urban neighborhoods. The barbershop is a rallying place in Black communities.

Barbershop owner Dana Miller said he is vaccinated, but not everyone in his family has received the shot.

"I have a 13-year-old niece now suffering with COVID because her mother did not get her vaccinated," Miller said. "That's heartbreaking to my wife."

Recently, he was contacted by the White House COVID response team to become a rallying place for vaccines.

On the last day in August, Miller's Man Cave Barbershop became a focal point in the fight against vaccine hesitancy.

"There is a stipend, but I would do this for free," said Miller.

Dr. Cameron Webb is a senior advisor and with the White House COVID-19 Response Team. He was on hand at Miller's barbershop to help answer questions.

"We are making sure regardless of what the origin of your hesitancy is we address that and we are creating opportunities for folks to make a decision," said Webb.

When asked what determines a successful event he said one shot.

"That means one less person in the hospital because of the COVID virus," said Webb, "The delta variant has punched holes in a number of theories about who is vulnerable and who is not."

Larrina, who did not want to give us her last name, was the first shot during the Shots at the Shop initiative

"I'm a CNA so I had to get the vaccine," she said.

Her friend, however, refused the shot so the effort to overcome vaccine hesitancy continues.

"That's one person less person who can end up hospitalized or dying from COVID of course anybody at any age can be affected," said Webb.

The initiative involved Florida Blue and the Jaguars, who were giving out game tickets.

At the end of the event, only three people were vaccinated. They were prepared for 70.

As the canvassed A. Philip Randolph Boulevard, many said they were already vaccinated.