



GIVING=LIVING

Campaign

Report to Congress | December 2022



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Executive Summary

Blood and plasma are invaluable, life-saving products that are needed every day to treat a variety of conditions. In fact, more than **17.9 million** blood transfusions occur in the U.S. every year during surgeries and childbirth and to treat cancer, blood disorders, serious injuries, severe anemia, and more (Jones et al., 2020). In addition, about **125,000** Americans rely on medication made from plasma to treat serious and rare diseases (CSL Behring, 2021). Developing these medications requires hundreds of donations. For example, it takes more than **1,200** plasma donations to treat one patient with Hemophilia A for one year, **900** plasma donations to treat one patient with Alpha-1 Antitrypsin Deficiency for one year, and more than **130** plasma donations to treat one patient with Primary Immune Deficiency for one year (Plasma Protein Therapeutics Association [PPTA], 2020).

Although there have been long standing challenges in creating a steady, ongoing supply of blood and plasma products, the COVID-19 pandemic caused severe shortages, with estimated decreases of about 20 percent. This shortage threatened the health care system and the people who depend on life-sustaining blood and plasma products.

When Congress passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act in March 2020, it called for the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to undertake a national public awareness campaign to address the severe and unprecedented blood shortage. In June 2020, HHS also committed to promoting plasma products as a part of the campaign following discussions with a bipartisan group of Members of Congress.

The campaign, which is led by the Office of Infectious Disease and HIV/AIDS Policy (OIDP), was launched in August 2022, with funds from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. This report provides a summary of campaign activities to date, from formative research, to implementation, to evaluation.

Campaign Planning and Development

Formative Research and Consultations

Literature Review and Environmental Scan

Campaign development began with formative research to examine the current environment and to understand audience barriers to blood and plasma donation. Research included an academic literature review, a review of existing campaigns, an analysis of social media conversations, and an analysis of mainstream media coverage. The research uncovered some key gaps and insights. There is:

- much less awareness and discussion about plasma donation than there is about blood donation (e.g., about what plasma is and what it is used for)
- a need for more inclusive materials (e.g., Spanish-language materials)
- a general lack of awareness regarding donation eligibility requirements
- a lack of clarity about the process, and there are myths related to both blood and plasma donation, especially around COVID-19 infection and vaccination

For additional trends in blood supply donation, please see the [HHS Report to Congress on the adequacy of the national blood supply](#).

Consultations with Subject Matter Experts

In addition to the literature review and environmental scan, ODP conducted subject matter expert panel meetings in November 2021 with blood and plasma industry representatives to gather additional insights and recommendations for the campaign. The expert panel meetings fulfilled the directive to consult with relevant accrediting bodies and representative organizations.

The blood industry experts recommended:

- normalizing and encouraging regular blood donations to support ongoing needs rather than urgent emergency situations
- providing information and education around the blood donation process, side effects, and eligibility
- focusing on lapsed donors in the short-term to help get the country out of crisis, but also engaging younger people to ensure a new generation of donors long-term
- using real-life stories and trusted messengers to motivate Americans to donate

The plasma industry experts recommend:

- addressing the stigma and negative stereotypes that exist around plasma donation
- highlighting information about the donation process and what source plasma is used for to increase understanding
- targeting new audiences, including those who might donate for altruistic, rather than financial, purposes
- using emotional storytelling with real-life patients that highlight the everyday use of plasma in addition to rare diseases

Consultations with Federal Officials

Congress asked HHS to consult with several high-level government officials. To fulfill the charge to consult with federal officials, ODP met with the Assistant Secretary for Health and others on her team, as well as representatives from the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR), the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Department of Defense (DoD), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The groups reviewed campaign audiences, messages, and materials and provided suggestions for improving awareness and conducting campaign outreach.

Focus Groups

In early 2022, ODP funded 28 focus groups in English and Spanish with a variety of racially and ethnically diverse audiences who had (1) donated regularly but recently stopped, (2) donated at least once but not regularly, and (3) who had never donated but were willing to. Participants indicated that helping others and having a personal connection (e.g., having a family member who had benefited from a donation) were key motivators to donating, although the monetary incentives were also an important motivator for plasma donation.

The team tested various messaging approaches and draft brand creative concepts. Participants favored the ones that were rooted in altruism and emphasized how donations benefit other individuals. In particular, the participants said they liked personal testimonies that sparked emotional connections and they preferred images that they perceived to be authentic and that featured real, diverse recipients.

“ I felt like it’s emotional. It tug[s] at your heartstrings. I got the chills when you’re reading ...[that] you’re extending their lives by being a donor. And they’re mentioning these people’s names there. So...it’s just more personal. It’s real.”

Quote from focus group participant after seeing a concept that featured an individual whose life was saved from blood donation

Goals and Objectives

The insights gleaned from the formative research guided the campaign’s goals and objectives. The overall public health goal is to ensure a constant supply of blood and plasma products. To meet that goal, the objectives are to increase the number and diversity of Americans who:

- understand why blood and plasma donation is important
- understand what blood and plasma donations are used for
- understand the blood and plasma donation process and eligibility requirements
- believe donating blood and plasma is the right thing to do
- donate blood and plasma
- make blood and plasma donation a habit

Key Audiences

Based on the extensive formative research that was conducted, the key audiences for blood and plasma are as follows.

Blood donation

A key tenant of the campaign is to increase the racial diversity of blood donors. Diversity in the blood supply is important because certain blood types are unique to specific groups and having a large, diverse pool of blood donors ensures that all patients will have access to the blood they need when they need it. The campaign aims to reach:

- Donors 45–65 years old who used to donate regularly but have donated less frequently in recent years—likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Younger donors in their 20s and 30s who:
 - Have donated previously (at least once, likely at a high school or college blood drive) but have never made it a habit.
 - Have never donated before.

Plasma donation

Since plasma donors are already a diverse group, the campaign focuses on:

- Donors 45–65 years old, especially those who are middle class and have not donated previously.
- Younger donors in their 20s and 30s who:
 - Used to donate regularly but have donated less frequently in recent years—likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Have donated previously but have never made it a habit.
 - Have never donated before.

Brand and Materials Development

Based on the formative research, expert panels, consultations, and focus group findings, ODP elected to proceed with the “Dear Hero” approach and the *Giving = Living* tagline and campaign name. This concept places appreciative recipient testimonials—from individuals who have received life-saving blood transfusions and people who rely on plasma-based therapies to treat rare or chronic conditions—front and center in campaign materials to evoke an emotional connection with the audience and to demonstrate how donation can make a difference in someone’s life.

Some of the individuals featured in the campaign materials include:



Heather

Mom and photographer from Dallas, Texas

She has sickle cell disease and has needed hundreds of blood transfusions to help treat it.



Earl

Army veteran and motivational speaker from Scranton, Pennsylvania

He was badly wounded by a roadside bomb in Afghanistan, during which he lost a lot of blood and needed to have his leg amputated.



Cesar

Musician and author from Atlanta, Georgia

His car was struck head-on by a drunk driver, which led to numerous broken bones and a shattered face. Blood transfusions saved his life.



Crystal

Mom and wellness coach from Birmingham, Alabama

She was left partially paralyzed by two neuromuscular autoimmune conditions and was unable to care for herself or her children. Plasma treatments gave Crystal her life back.



Arabel

Student and artist from Neosho, Missouri

Her hereditary angioedema (HAE) causes potentially life-threatening swelling all over her body. Plasma treatments keep her symptoms at bay.



Alice

Artist and photographer from Houston, Texas

Her rare genetic disease—common variable immunodeficiency (CVID)—causes most of the antibodies her body uses to fight infections to disappear. Monthly plasma treatments help her body fight off infections.

*You can read more about these individuals and several others saved by **blood** or **plasma** donations on the Giving = Living website.*

The recipient testimonials are featured on **English** and **Spanish** websites and throughout campaign materials, including **videos**, TV and radio public service announcements, out-of-home ads, social media graphics, and digital ads. The campaign website and downloadable fact sheets offer information on why donation is important, what blood and plasma are used for, the donation process, and eligibility requirements. They also address common concerns.

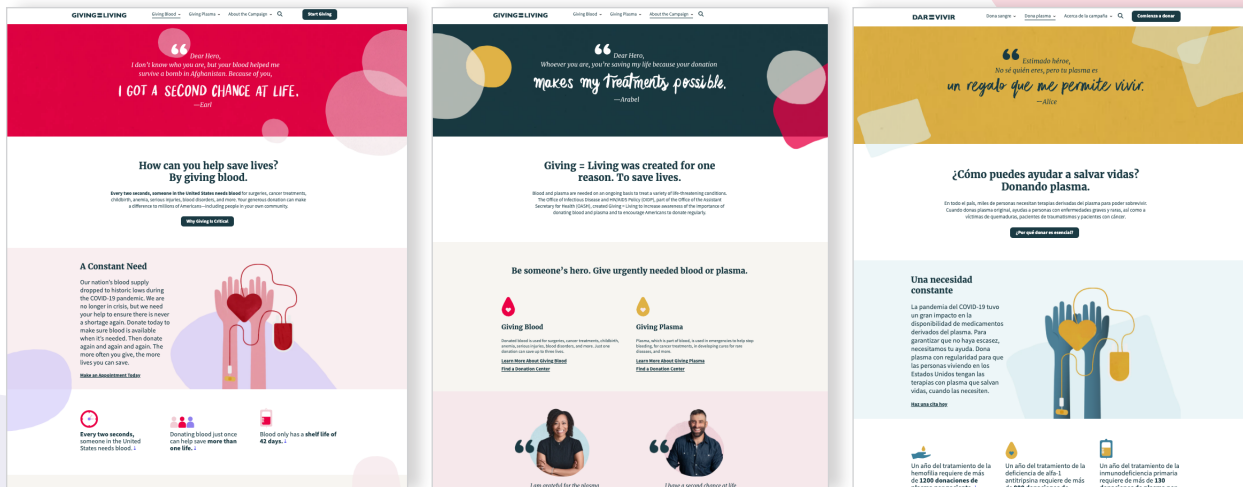


Figure 1: English and Spanish Website



Figure 2: Paid Ad Examples

Dear Hero,
Your blood
got me
through
another
sickle cell
crisis.

Because
of you,
I can be here
for my
little boy.

Heather
Sickle cell warrior

GIVING = LIVING
Give Blood. Replenish the Supply.

hhs.gov/giveblood

Estimado
héroe,
tu plasma
es un regalo
invaluable,
que me
permite
VIVIR.

Alice
Vive con una enfermedad rara
que causa inmunodeficiencia

DAR = VIVIR
Dono plasma. Reabastece el suministro.

hhs.gov/donaplama

Dear Hero,
I can enjoy
being a
teenager

because
your plasma
donation
is
Saving
my life.

arabel
Living with a rare genetic disorder

GIVING = LIVING
Give Plasma. Replenish the Supply.

hhs.gov/giveplasma

ESTIMADO
HÉROE,
LA SANGRE
QUE DONASTE
AYUDÓ A
SALVARME.

GRACIAS A TI,
PUEDO VOLVER
A PERSEGUIR
MIS
SUEÑOS.

CÉSAR
Soy un miembro del equipo de fútbol
del estado de Missouri

DAR = VIVIR
Dono sangre. Reabastece el suministro.

hhs.gov/donasangre

Figure 3: Out of Home Examples

Campaign Implementation

OIDP launched the *Giving = Living* campaign in August 2022, and has continuously added and optimized campaign content to motivate people across the country to donate blood and plasma, including concerted outreach efforts to Black and Hispanic people who can help to ensure a more diverse supply of blood and plasma products. Activities include a range of paid, earned, and owned media tactics and partnership development.

Paid Media

To reach key audiences, the campaign is running a plethora of English and Spanish search, programmatic, and social media ads. The ads launched in September 2022 and will run through December 2022. As of December 15, 2022, these ads have generated more than 26 million ad views (impressions) and 224,825 link clicks, beating performance against similar health action-driving campaigns in virtually all cases, with 2.18% of people clicking on campaign digital ads.

The ads—video ads, in particular—that share personal stories and drive a strong emotional response are garnering the most views and clicks. One example is the series of video **ads** in which recipients directly address donors as heroes and explain the positive impact that **blood transfusions** and **plasma-based therapies** have had on their lives, such as being able to walk again.

The campaign has also performed particularly well in certain markets and among certain audiences. The markets with the highest number of ad impressions are Los Angeles, CA; Dallas–Fort Worth, TX; Chicago, IL; Houston, TX; and Miami–Ft. Lauderdale, FL. In addition, ads are performing well among Hispanic and Black individuals. In paid social, the Hispanic audience spend has the highest click-through-rates, while programmatic ads targeted to Black audiences have the strongest performance with placements driving extremely high click-through-rates and video completion rates.

Social Media

A key component of campaign outreach includes sharing educational and motivational content across HHS, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (OASH), and OIDP channels. This content includes personal blood and plasma recipient stories (static images, quotes, and videos), facts about blood and plasma donation, and information on where to donate. Primary calls to action included “find a location” and “learn more about donating.” Facebook frames and animated GIFs and stickers were also created in both English and Spanish to promote the campaign and to help encourage others to donate blood or give plasma. Highlights of social media outreach include:

- From launch through the end of November 2022, *Giving = Living*'s organic social media content reached more than 36 million people across Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

- From launch through the end of November 2022, the campaign’s organic social media content generated more than 9,300 total engagements across Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram and generated more than 508,000 impressions.
- At the end of November, the animated materials generated more than 1.3 million views.
- From mid-October through November 2022, the Facebook frames have been used as a profile picture 8,800 times.
- From launch through November 2022, *Giving = Living* videos uploaded to YouTube generated more than 2.9 million views.
- From launch through November 2022, the campaign hashtags received 77.1 million impressions on Twitter.
 - #GivingEqualsLiving: 40,698,139
 - #GiveBlood: 24,616,763
 - #GivePlasma: 11,842,223
- The top federal accounts on Twitter that include the hashtags in posts are (1) @HHSGov (25 tweets), (2) @MinorityHealthy (12 tweets), (3) @NIH_NHLB (four tweets), and (4) @HHS_ASH (two tweets).
- Discussions the public has had about donating blood and plasma on social media between September 2022 and November 2022 include the following topics:
 - encouraging others to donate blood/plasma
 - recounting personal experience with donating blood/plasma
 - thanking people for their donations of blood/plasma
 - testimonials from people who will be supported or treated with the blood/plasma donation
 - the promotion of blood/plasma donations and the location of local drives
 - research and statistics on the benefits of donating blood/plasma
 - research and statistics about the national blood crises and need for donations



Earned Media

Securing media coverage has been vital to campaign outreach efforts. When the campaign launched in August 2022, a press release was posted to [hhs.gov](https://www.hhs.gov) and a satellite media tour (SMT) was held featuring HHS Assistant Secretary for Health, Admiral Rachel L. Levine. A radio media tour (RMT) followed a few weeks later with spokespeople from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), including Dr. Julie Panepinto and Dr. Courtney Fitzhugh. Dr. Gary Gibbons, NHLBI’s Director, also served as spokesperson for an interview with the Black Information Network. Two short articles on blood donation—one in English and one in Spanish—are currently in market, with two more on plasma donation set to be disseminated in early 2023. Earned media highlights include:

- From August 2022 through November 2022, earned media efforts have generated over 778.7 million impressions through media coverage in all 50 states.
- The RMT and SMT resulted in 438.17 million impressions, 426 radio station airings, and 86 TV station airings.
- The English and Spanish blood donation mat articles have resulted in 3,098 republished articles, 340 million online impressions, and 782,000 readers reached.

Donated Media

To augment the earned and paid tactics, the campaign developed and disseminated a series of public service announcements in English and Spanish, including TV and radio spots and out-of-home ads.

Highlights are as follows:

- Between September 2022 and November 2022, donated media has garnered more than 2.4 million impressions, for an estimated value of more than \$2 million.
- From September 2022 through November 2022, English TV PSAs aired 3,389 times, Spanish TV PSAs aired 2,187 times, and Spanish radio PSAs aired 206 times. These activities generated more than 37 million impressions.
- The campaign garnered 187 out-of-home placements in 20 markets across the country, for more than 209 million impressions and \$466,000 in value. These placements include 10 bus shelters, 114 posters, and 63 billboards in states including Alabama, New York, Texas, Colorado, South Dakota, and more.

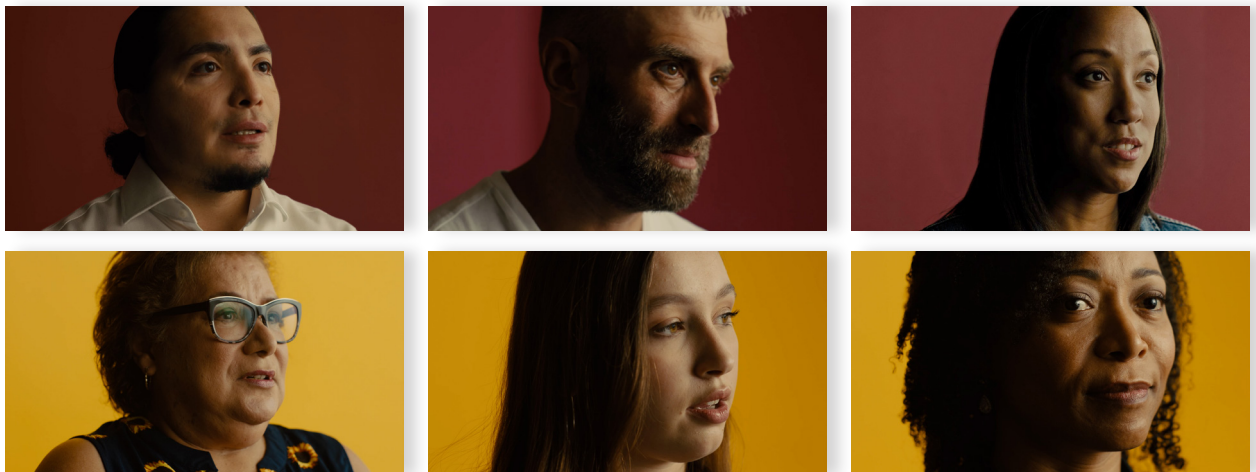


Figure 4: Online and Broadcast **PSAs**

Innovation Challenge

In October 2022, *Giving = Living* launched a challenge through challenge.gov inviting individuals, organizations, and coalitions to submit innovative, evidence-based, community-driven ideas for increasing blood and plasma donations. Up to 10 ideas will be chosen to win \$10,000 each. The challenge closed on December 5, with 20 submissions, and judging is currently underway. ODP plans to announce winners in January 2023.

Collaborations

The campaign is currently conducting outreach to a range of industry, corporate, nonprofit, and federal organizations, such as faith-based entities, health and wellness groups, sororities and fraternities, media companies, and much more. These organizations are sharing materials (e.g., factsheets, videos) with their members and followers, promoting the campaign and its hashtags on social media, posting content to their websites, and more. Organizations currently supporting the campaign include:

- Association for the Advancement of Blood & Biotherapies (AABB)
- PPTA
- NHLBI
- Armed Services Blood Program (ASBP)
- American Red Cross
- ImpactLife
- Vitalant
- Grifols
- CSL Plasma
- Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center
- GBS/CIDP Foundation International
- Alpha-1 Foundation

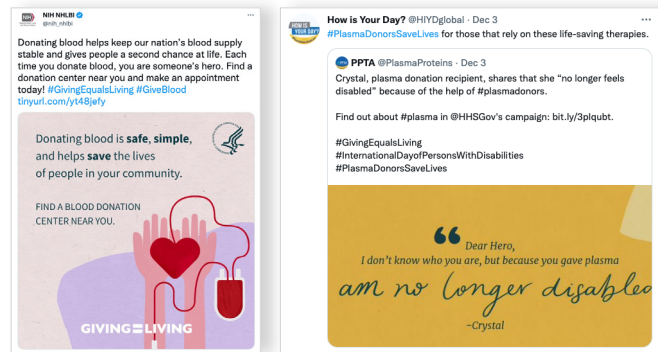


Figure 5: Partner Social Media Posts

OIDP will continue to engage more organizations over the next several months, with the goal of creating campaign sustainability so that *Giving = Living* promotion is ongoing and messages and materials continue to reach and inspire potential donors, even after funding runs out.

Campaign Website

The campaign website, which launched on August 4, 2022, is an integral part of *Giving = Living*. All outreach—from the paid ads to the PSAs and partnerships—drive people to the site to learn more about donation, to hear personal testimonials, and to find a local donation center. Outreach efforts have generated more than 203,000 new users to the *Giving = Living* website, and more than 313,000 page views. The campaign has driven 22,500 users to the AABB blood donation locator and 18,200 users to the PPTA plasma donation locator. In addition, the American Red Cross reports that *Giving = Living* outreach efforts contributed to increases in web visits to redcross.org and increases in the number of blood donation appointments made through the site. Between July 1, 2022 and December 14, 2022, the organization estimates the campaign drove approximately 10,000 website visits and more than 750 appointments above the typical baseline.

Evaluation

To monitor success, campaign exposure is tracked and reported on a monthly basis through the metrics outlined on the previous pages. In addition, an online survey is planned for early 2023 to assess the campaign materials' potential impact. The findings and insights from this survey will provide audience feedback on campaign materials, a pulse on campaign exposure and recall, and information on how campaign exposure could be impacting participants' reported likelihood of donating blood and/or plasma. The survey protocol is currently in clearance.

Lastly, ODP monitors trends in the blood and plasma supply. As of November 30, 2022, AABB data indicates that the national blood supply is "green," meaning that the majority of blood center inventories have enough blood to meet normal demands. Based on the plasma industry's data collection process, there is a three-month delay in reporting, so the current plasma supply status is unknown. However, PPTA has anecdotally indicated increases in plasma donations since August when the *Giving = Living* campaign launched.

“ Since the *Giving = Living* campaign launched, HHS and AABB have helped connect tens of thousands of Americans to local blood donation sites. And we’re just getting started. Ensuring that blood is available for every patient who needs it is a critical priority for our health care system.”

Debra BenAvram
Chief Executive Officer, AABB

Next Steps

Giving = Living campaign activities will continue through March 2023 with social media content across HHS, ODP, and OASH channels, a plasma donation mat article, two blog posts, and extensive partnership engagement. Furthermore, campaign evaluation efforts will continue to monitor exposure across all outreach activities and, pending clearance, the survey will be fielded in February 2023.

“**HHS’ *Giving = Living* campaign has been instrumental in empowering potential new plasma donors with the knowledge necessary to donate. Since the campaign’s inception, it has become the number one source of traffic to PPTA’s online tool for locating nearby plasma donation centers. We are proud to have partnered with HHS in these efforts and hope to continue our collaboration and increase awareness of the critical need for plasma and plasma donors.**”

Joshua Penrod
Senior Vice President, Head of Global Plasma, PPTA

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