

## Diving into equity and inclusivity for kids with sickle cell disease

As part of its ongoing efforts to promote health equity and inclusivity among patients with sickle cell disease (SCD), [The Cigna Group](#)<sup>SM</sup> launched its *Safe Swimming with Sickle Cell* pilot program at Camp Crescent Moon in Metro Atlanta in July. Specifically designed for children with SCD, the program offered swimming instruction to 80 young campers living with the condition. The initiative was led by [Ivy Bryant](#), a senior director of client relationship management for The Cigna Group's [Evernorth Health Services](#), drawing inspiration from her 12-year-old daughter, Peyton, who also has SCD.

The program, developed by [Cigna Healthcare](#)<sup>SM</sup> clinicians, provided swim lessons and education to address a variety of SCD challenges. These included the prevention of condition-induced pain and fatigue resulting from the condition, promotion of swimming as a feasible physical activity to improve overall health (given the necessary precautions) and enhancement of mental and emotional health by promoting inclusivity, acceptance and encouragement.

Collaborating with [Children's Healthcare of Atlanta](#) and the [YMCA of Metro Atlanta](#), The Cigna Group orchestrated a week of swim instruction, which centered on providing SCD-focused swim lessons given to the campers by the Y instructors. A key component of the *Safe Swimming with Sickle Cell* program was the education of children with SCD about the importance of proper preparation when swimming with the disease. This was done through a custom-tailored swim guide that was developed for both children and caregivers and endorsed by Cigna Healthcare clinicians.

Sickle cell disease predominantly impacts non-Hispanic, African American/Black individuals, who account for [more than 90% of those affected](#). The *Safe Swimming with Sickle Cell* program aimed to provide emotional support to campers and reduce the social stigma associated with this chronic, cultural disease by fostering a safe, welcoming environment. By offering instruction on special precautions to take for swimming, the program enabled the campers to partake in, and enjoy, an activity often available to them due to their condition.

"Most of all," Bryant said, "the program gives these kids – including my daughter – a greater sense of belonging and connectedness, so they can see it's possible to just be a kid and thrive beyond their disease."

Eric Martinez, vice president of marketing at The Cigna Group, expressed enthusiasm for the program. "I'm excited about how this work strategically aligns with The Cigna Group's 'each&every' health equity campaign by underscoring the importance of health equity and inclusivity, as well as by highlighting Accredo's Junior Care Force educational experience to

help caregivers and kids with chronic and complex conditions like SCD understand their disease...on their terms,” he said.

**EXTERNAL CTA:**

You can see the powerful impact of *Safe Swimming with Sickle Cell* [here](#). To find out how you can help expand this program into other communities, as well as support other health equity initiatives from The Cigna Group, please ask your Cigna Healthcare account representative.

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