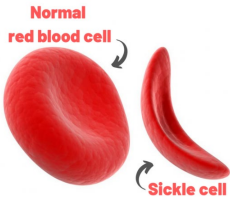


# Community & Care: Sickle Cell Disease in Texas

## What is Sickle Cell Disease?



A comparison of a normal red blood cell and a sickle red blood cell.<sup>1</sup>

Sickle cell disease is a group of inherited blood disorders resulting in abnormal hemoglobin. Hemoglobin is found in red blood cells and is a protein that carries oxygen. Abnormal hemoglobin from sickle cell disease cause red blood cells to become hard, sticky, and sickle shaped. This can cause severe pain, chronic fatigue, stroke, serious infections, and organ damage.

There are several types of sickle cell disease. Which type someone has depends on the genes they inherited from their parents. Some types of sickle cell disease are more severe than others. In Texas, approximately 200 babies with sickle cell disease are identified each year with newborn screening.



Andre in a sickle cell disease related hospitalization.<sup>2</sup>

## Heart of Texas: Andre's Story

### Andre Harris: The Patient Advocate

Andre Harris is a PhD candidate in Social Work at the University of Houston and is a member of several sickle cell disease advisory boards. Andre lives and thrives with sickle cell disease.

### What is it like living with sickle cell disease?

*The best answer to that question is: unpredictable. You never know what's going to happen. I wish people truly grasped how dangerous this disease is and how much extra support we are not seeing from the collective community.*

### Have you experienced disparities in health care?

*I always feel like I'm treated differently when I present to the emergency room for pain - I'm treated like a dog. The questioning, second-guessing, and doubting, to me, are unique to sickle cell.*

### What is your primary goal for sickle cell disease advocacy?

*I want to inspire more people to learn about sickle cell and get involved to make a tangible difference. I want to inspire more people to donate blood and bone marrow, and to host sickle cell blood drives and health fairs.*

### Who has influenced you the most?

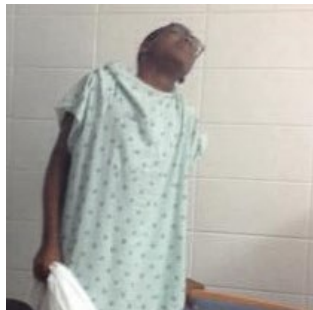
*My parents. They taught me that despite my illness, I still could do what I wanted to do and that no one else could stop me. My disease will not and cannot be the automatic disqualifying feature in my life.*

For information, visit: [dshs.texas.gov/newborn-screening-program/sickle-cell-disease](https://dshs.texas.gov/newborn-screening-program/sickle-cell-disease)

<sup>1</sup><https://www.regencymedicalcentre.com/blog/world-sickle-cell-day-2020-what-is-sickle-cell-disease/>

<sup>2</sup> Photo provided by Andre Harris

\*This project was funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (DD-23-0002).



Andre in a sickle cell disease related hospitalization.<sup>2</sup>



Andre in a sickle cell disease related hospitalization.<sup>2</sup>