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**BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF MASSACHUSETTS FOUNDATION AWARDS \$540,000
TO PROMOTE ACCESS TO CULTURALLY COMPETENT HEALTH CARE**

BOSTON—May 3, 2006— Minorities currently comprise 25 percent of the U.S. population. By 2050, that number is expected to reach 50 percent. Among the most significant implications of this demographic phenomenon is the impact on the quality and delivery of health care. In addition, cultural differences related to sexual orientation, homelessness and disability affect the consumer's health care experience. Language differences, divergent values among providers and patients, limited caregiver diversity and other factors can impede access to quality health care services. To help expand access to culturally competent health care, the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation (BCBSMA Foundation) recently awarded \$540,000 to 15 organizations across Massachusetts.

Grants in the *Pathways to Culturally Competent Health Care* program area support health care delivery organizations to expand access to culturally competent health care in a way that is systemic, replicable and sustainable. These grantees are compelling models of successful collaboration with community-based organizations, strong organizational commitment at various management and staff levels, and effective capacity building to serve culturally diverse populations. Organizations receive \$15,000 for planning grants and up to \$50,000 for implementation grants.

“Delivering culturally competent care entails commitment and dedication from all levels of an organization,” said Foundation president Nancy Turnbull. “Institutionalizing cultural competence is a critical, but by no means simple endeavor for health care organizations. We are proud to help these committed organizations to implement innovative and transformative programs.”

The Foundation awarded one-year planning grants of \$15,000 for initiatives such as this one:

- Dorchester House Multi-Service Center (DHMSC) received \$15,000 to better understand their Vietnamese patients so as to effectively treat two prevalent health issues - maternal depression and poor childhood nutrition - in culturally appropriate ways. During the planning year, community interviews will be conducted to inform design of staff and provider training modules and patient education materials. Key collaborators on this project include: Dorchester South Women, Infants, and Children Supplemental Nutrition Program, Bay Cove Early Intervention Program, and Vietnamese American Initiative for Development.

The Foundation awarded \$50,000 implementation grants for initiatives such as these:

- Holyoke Medical Center (HMC) received \$50,000 to provide culturally sensitive care for Latino patients undergoing the end-of-life (EOL) process. This will be accomplished by training staff and providers about Latino EOL values, traditions, and preferences, and educating patients and families about the EOL process and Health Care Proxies.

- Franciscan Hospital for Children (FHC) received \$50,000 to develop and implement a cultural competence training program for hospital managers and staff and future trainers to improve communications with their patient population, who are children with special health care needs and their families. The program will also evaluate the effectiveness of staff training and patient satisfaction.

About the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation

Since its inception in 2001, the BCBSMAF (www.bcbsmafoundation.org) has committed grants totaling \$19 million to 199 organizations, and developed numerous policy initiatives to expand access to health care for the uninsured and low-income individuals and families in Massachusetts. The Foundation is governed by its own 18-member Board of Directors and operates separately from the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (BCBSMA) corporation. BCBSMA contributed an initial endowment of \$55 million in 2001. The Foundation's current endowment of \$87 million makes it one of the largest private health philanthropies in the state.

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