



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation Announces Over \$1.5 Million in Grants to Support Health Care Access Projects

**BOSTON (Dec. 20, 2019)** – The [Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation](#) has awarded more than \$1.5 million in grants to 11 health care organizations to support programs that improve access to behavioral health urgent care and address key social determinants of health including housing and food insecurity.

The Foundation provided a total of \$1.2 million to six organizations through its *Expanding Access to Behavioral Health Urgent Care* grant program, which builds upon the state’s existing Emergency Services Program (ESP) system and expands the recipient organizations’ ability to provide community-based behavioral health urgent care. The three-year program, renewable annually, grants \$200,000 to the following organizations:

- **Bay Cove Human Services**, the sole provider of emergency behavioral health services on Cape Cod. The organization plans to provide follow-up services for up to 14 days post-crisis episode; increase awareness of services to individuals with behavioral health challenges along with providers and policy officers; and launch a “No Wrong Door” initiative to assist individuals with substance use disorder to gain access to treatment in a timely way.
- **Boston Medical Center**, the largest ESP in Massachusetts. BMC aims to improve the delivery of high-quality, culturally competent care through its Boston Emergency Services Team (BEST) model. It seeks to strengthen the rapid assessment and treatment of individuals while providing referrals and access to appropriate services in the least restrictive environment, promoting safety and recovery, and providing medical support and triage to divert people from the emergency department and inpatient psychiatric units.
- **The Brien Center for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services**, a Pittsfield-based provider of round-the-clock crisis assessment, intervention and stabilization services to anyone experiencing a behavioral health crisis in Berkshire County. The organization



will use the grant to increase community-based locations with behavioral health urgent care and expand their operating hours. It will also coordinate with Berkshire Health System, Berkshire House of Correction and ServiceNet to create an additional walk-in site at a former city jail.

- **Clinical & Support Options Inc.**, a Northampton-based ESP serving Franklin County, Hampshire County and the North Quabbin area of Worcester County. The grant will increase its ability to provide an integrated behavioral health system that connects individuals to the service that meets their needs as soon as possible. It will also continue its Greenfield Living Room peer support diversion program, and grow partnerships with other local organizations, state human services agencies and police departments.
- **Community Healthlink** in Worcester, one of only three state-licensed behavioral health urgent care centers and affiliated with the UMass Memorial Health Care System. The organization will initiate a process to provide clients with access to same-day/next-day medication assisted treatment, and hire case managers to provide follow-up services to clients, among other initiatives.
- **Lahey Health Behavioral Services**, which provides rapid assessment and immediate crisis stabilization services to people in need in Greater Lowell from a facility at Lowell General Hospital. With its grant, the organization will continue a pilot program to introduce telemedicine for psychiatric prescribing and consultation to its Urgent Care Clinic. It also will focus on initiating medication-assisted treatment via telepsychiatry.

“The Foundation’s vision for behavioral health urgent care is to expand the existing capacity in the Commonwealth’s system by supporting more seamless, comprehensive and effective care for the greatest number of adults with mental health, substance use and co-occurring needs,” said Audrey Shelto, president of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation. “The grantees made great progress during their planning year in 2019 and we see great potential ahead as we continue to support their initiatives through this new grant program.”

Another group of grants, *Going Beyond Health Care: Addressing Social Determinants Through a Cross-Sector Approach*, is aimed at increasing collaboration between health care organizations and social services agencies. Building on an initial planning year, the Foundation awarded a total of \$225,000 to three organizations addressing issues related to health and housing, and a third organization focusing on food insecurity and health. The grantees receiving \$75,000 each are:

- **Metro Housing Boston**, which provides innovative and personalized services that help individuals and families achieve housing stability, economic self-sufficiency, and improved quality of life. The grant will help the organization serve patients of Boston Medical Center who face imminent homelessness, eviction or foreclosure. It will also



pilot new software that will enable electronic referrals to Metro Housing and integrate the data into BMC's electronic health record system.

- **Project Bread – The Walk for Hunger**, a statewide food security organization dedicated to combating hunger and promoting positive health outcomes. The organization's project will address the issue of food insecurity by using Supplemental Nutrition Assistant Program (SNAP) resources to increase the consumption of healthy foods among the patients of Family Health Center of Worcester. The project will establish a formal referral system for patients who screen positive for food insecurity by building off the protocol of Community Care Cooperative (C3), a MassHealth ACO.
- **The Community Builders**, a nonprofit real estate developer that builds affordable housing for families and seniors. The organization will use the grant to incorporate trauma-informed approaches into housing by changing policies and practices that may be inadvertently exacerbating residents' stress and trauma. The grant also will support the engagement of "Health Champions" to support community residents in accessing mental health care through the Family Health Center of Worcester and Worcester Addresses Childhood Trauma (Worcester ACTs).

The Foundation also awarded two *Special Initiatives* grants for a total of \$78,000. Special Initiatives grants provide one-time, non-renewable support of up to \$50,000 for a 12-month period. These grants support innovative pilots and demonstration projects in Massachusetts that expand access to health care for low-income consumers, align with the Foundation's strategic focus areas, and complement the objectives of the Foundation's other funding, including synergies between grantmaking and policy initiatives.

### **About the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation**

The mission of the [Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation](#) is to expand access to health care for low-income and vulnerable individuals and families in the Commonwealth. The Foundation was founded in 2001 with an initial endowment from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts. It operates separately from the company and is governed by its own Board of Directors.

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