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With Focus on Health Equity, BCBSMA Foundation Announces Massachusetts Institute for Community Health Leadership Class

BOSTON (Oct. 25, 2021) – The [Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation](#) today announced the Massachusetts Institute for Community Health Leadership (MICHL) 2021-2022 class, a group of 16 diverse professionals who will advance their leadership capabilities and learn new practices and strategies designed to increase their personal impact and strengthen their organizations' role in building a more equitable health care system.

“MICHL is a vital tool for preparing our next generation of health care leaders,” said Audrey Shelto, president of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation. “The program is designed to equip participants with the skills and knowledge that enable them to lead in key areas including addressing the inequities in our existing health care system. We have seen many graduates go on to become leaders of their organizations and in their communities.”

The experiential program brings together emerging leaders who currently direct or manage programs at a variety of health care organizations across Massachusetts for a series of classroom, peer-to-peer and professional learning opportunities. Since 2014, the program has had a particular focus on structural racism and racial inequities in health care.

“Our emphasis on structural racism will continue with the current cohort as we explore how the racial justice movement of 2020 and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic have affected the lives of people of color who depend on the health care system, and made more visible the advantage of white people in accessing that system,” said Michael McCormack, director of the MICHL program.

The MICHL participants, selected through an application process, include developing leaders from public health departments, community health centers, behavioral health providers, advocacy groups, hospitals, and academia. The program began in 2005, features expert faculty with varied backgrounds, and counts more than 180 graduates who have advanced their careers and enhanced their effectiveness as leaders in community health.



“I was part of the first cohort and MICHL came at just the right time in my career,” said Dr. Monica Bharel, who was medical director of the Barbara McInnis House at the time and later became commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. “The program allowed me the space to think about my goals and strengths. It taught me concrete skills in many areas, such as communication and facilitative leadership, that I still use today.”

MICHL is an 18-day educational program presented over the course of nine months, with some sessions presented virtually due to COVID-19 guidelines. The Foundation underwrites the majority of costs associated with the program.

The 2021-22 MICHL participants are:

- **Theresa Alphonse**, Program Manager, Community Partners & Health Equity, Steward Health Care Network
- **Jasmine Bland**, Manager, Massachusetts Health Policy Commission
- **Manuel Gonzalez**, Director Payor Programs, Beth Israel Lahey Performance Network
- **Daniela Johnson**, Director of Clinical Practice, Vinfen
- **Claudine Joseph**, Program Coordinator, Center for Primary Care/Harvard Medical School
- **John Kane**, Coordinator of Grants & Strategic Partnerships, Boston Housing Authority
- **Anna Kaplan**, Director of Epidemiology & Data Services, Cambridge Health Alliance
- **Erica Marshall**, Deputy Director, Division of Health Protection & Promotions, Massachusetts Department of Public Health
- **Daphne Mazuz**, Lead Technical Assistance Manager, Centering Healthcare Institute
- **Gina Patterson**, Director of Boston Opportunity Systems, Boston Medical Center
- **Angelina Ramirez**, Chief Executive Officer, Stavros Center for Independent Living
- **Sarimer Sanchez**, Infectious Diseases Bureau Director, Boston Public Health Commission
- **Karen Schoenherr**, Associate Director of Training & Organizational Development, Planned Parenthood
- **Gary Sing**, Director of Delivery System Investment & Social Services Integration, Office of Payment and Care Delivery Innovation, MassHealth
- **Jaime Tirrell Hassey**, Speech Language Pathologist, MGH Chelsea HealthCare Center
- **Ayn Yeagle**, Executive Director, Growing Places

For more information about MICHL, please visit:

<https://www.bluecrossmafoundation.org/programs/massachusetts-institute-community-health-leadership>



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 people 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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