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Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation Makes Grants to Help Transform Delivery of Care

*New Program Provides \$1.2 Million to Expand Access to Behavioral Health Urgent Care;
\$300,000 Will Support Food, Housing and Other Social Determinants of Health Projects*

BOSTON (Jan. 10, 2019) – The [Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation](#) has awarded more than \$1.5 million in grants to 10 health care organizations to support programs that improve access to health care and coverage for vulnerable and low-income residents – including a new grant program designed to expand access to behavioral health urgent care for adults across the Commonwealth.

“When people get sick in the middle of the night or injured on the weekend when their primary care provider is closed, they can seek non-emergency care at an urgent care center,” said Audrey Shelto, president of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation. “Unfortunately, that option is not readily available in Massachusetts for people seeking urgent, outpatient care for a mental health or substance use disorder. Our goal with the new grant program is to develop an urgent care infrastructure that is parallel to the medical system.”

The new grant program, called *Expanding Access to Behavioral Health Urgent Care*, will provide \$1.2 million to support the following organizations for an initial planning year:

- **Bay Cove Human Services**, the sole provider of emergency behavioral health services on Cape Cod. A \$200,000 grant will support additional clinical staff for the opening of a satellite office and mobile crisis team for communities between Hyannis and Provincetown.
- **Boston Medical Center**, the largest Emergency Services Provider (ESP) in Massachusetts. BMC will use its \$200,000 in funding to plan enhancements, which may include expanding delivery of medication-assisted treatment to Community Crisis Stabilization units, integrating certified recovery coaches into treatment teams, and developing follow-up clinical services through its urgent care centers.



- **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. A \$200,000 grant will allow the organization to ensure same-day access for outpatient services, adequately staff its ESP clinic so that it remains open to address both urgent and emergent needs, and increase the bed capacity of its Community Crisis Stabilization program.
- **Community Healthlink** in Worcester, one of only three state-licensed behavioral health urgent care centers and affiliated with the UMass Memorial Health Care System. It will use a \$200,000 grant to restore 24/7 urgent care clinic services, provide medication assisted treatment, develop telemedicine capabilities, and build a team of certified recovery coaches.
- **Clinical & Support Options**, an Emergency Services Program serving Franklin County, Hampshire County and the North Quabbin area of Worcester County. The Northampton-based organization will use its \$183,000 grant to develop a sustainable model for behavioral health urgent care by improving urgent psychiatric evaluations for patients who do not already have a provider and will enable ongoing monitoring and support to adults for seven days after the initial crisis intervention, 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. The \$200,000 funding will help enhance its urgent care clinic by introducing telemedicine for real-time psychiatric prescribing, using community health workers to offer services following an emergent or urgent evaluation, and developing an integrated electronic health record to improve crisis treatment and follow-up planning.

These organizations will convene during the planning year to share best practices, hear from local and national experts on specific technical aspects of building their urgent care capacity, and ultimately establish the essential elements required for an effective urgent care system in Massachusetts.

A second set of grants will support efforts by interdisciplinary teams of social service and health care organizations to coordinate services for the well-being of their clients. The Foundation awarded \$300,000 in *Going Beyond Health Care* grants to four organizations to support a collaborative, cross-sector approach to addressing the social determinants of health for low-income and vulnerable populations. The grantees receiving \$75,000 each, also for a planning year, 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 improve the data management system for the organization's Housing to Health program in partnership with Boston Medical Center.



- **Project Bread**, a statewide food security organization dedicated to combating hunger and promoting positive health outcomes. The organization will use the funding to coordinate supplemental food and nutrition services for low-income residents in Worcester County, particularly in Southbridge and Webster, who are patients of Family Health Center of Worcester. Project Bread will partner with the Regional Economic Council, Health Leads and the UMass Extension Nutrition Education Program.
- **The Community Builders**, a nonprofit real estate developer that builds affordable housing for families and seniors. It will develop a family-centered intervention to address housing stability and trauma as key social determinants of health. Partners include Family Health Center of Worcester, Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance, the Worcester Police Department, and researchers at Boston College and Clark University's Local Action Research Partnership.
- **Way Finders**, a community development organization and the largest nonprofit housing provider in western Massachusetts. Way Finders will partner with Behavioral Health Network and Mercy Medical Center to support families and provide clinical care as they move from shelter to permanent housing in Springfield and Holyoke. Together they will address barriers that lead to housing instability and poor health outcomes.

Grantees will meet regularly and participate in peer learning as they develop their model and approach to providing services that address health and social factors for their client population. They will also inform the development of non-clinical and clinical metrics that will measure the impact of their efforts.

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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