



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation awards \$500,000 in grants to help Mass. residents access health coverage

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BOSTON — The Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation has awarded \$500,000 in grants to 23 community-based organizations to help low-income consumers enroll in public health insurance programs and make appointments with providers. The grants range from \$20,000 to \$25,000.

“Getting enrolled in a health insurance plan is a complicated process. Most of us have human resource departments to help us understand our options and benefits. Low-income state residents have outreach workers,” said Sarah Iselin, President of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation. “This funding furthers the mission of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation by expanding health care access for all residents of the Commonwealth.”

The grants were made in the Connecting Consumers with Care grant program area, which was established by the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation in 2001. The funding is intended to strengthen community-based efforts designed to ensure consumers understand, enroll, and maintain health coverage under MassHealth, Commonwealth Care, the Health Safety Net, and

other public and private health access programs, and utilize the health care services to which they are entitled.

The following organizations have been awarded grants in the Connecting Consumers with Care program area:

African Community Health Initiatives (Greater Boston Area, Framingham, Brockton, Lynn, Worcester, Cambridge, Somerville, Waltham, Lowell, and Malden) was awarded \$25,000 to support the Early Intervention/Community Referral Program, which assesses the health care needs of clients and connects them with health care providers within the organization's network. The group also works to break down cultural, geographical, and language barriers among African immigrants.

Berkshire Health Systems (Central and Southern Berkshire County) was awarded \$20,000 to support its Advocacy for Access program, which provides services in the inpatient substance abuse and inpatient psychiatric units of Berkshire Medical Center, as well as the Berkshire County House of Corrections and the Community Corrections Department. Target populations include rural uninsured working adults, Spanish-speaking adults, clients requiring assistance with MassHealth disability determinations, people dealing with substance abuse and mental health issues, people who are homeless, and people who are incarcerated in the community corrections system.

Boston Public Health Commission (Dorchester, Roxbury, Hyde Park, Allston-Brighton, and East Boston) was awarded \$25,000 for the Mayor's Health Line Health Care Access Project, which provides outreach, eligibility screening, system navigation and post-enrollment assistance to uninsured low-income and immigrant workers and their employers. A special emphasis will be placed on reaching on Vietnamese, Black, and Latino populations.

Brockton Neighborhood Health Center (Greater Brockton) was awarded \$25,000 to fund the hiring of a bicultural Community Health Worker who will provide group sessions with a focus on disease prevention for both patients and community residents. Community forums with providers and traditional outreach events will be conducted, in addition to quarterly group information/education sessions about health care reform, eligibility, and coverage options.

Child Care Resource Center (Arlington, Belmont, Cambridge, Needham, Newton, Somerville, Watertown, Wellesley, and Weston) was awarded \$20,000 to support the Health Access Project, which targets low-income and moderate-income families, English language learners, families and individuals living in subsidized housing, low-wage child care workers, and self-employed Family Child Care providers. Clients will receive health access information, enrollment assistance and follow-up services. Additionally, the project will educate other community-based service providers, outreach workers, and lay volunteers about health access and resources for individuals and families.

Community Action Committee of Cape Cod & Islands, Inc. (Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket) was awarded \$25,000 to fund a Community Health Worker of the HOPE Project, who provides outreach and enrollment services to low- and moderate-income residents, with a focus on non-English speaking populations and seasonal and immigrant workers. A significant portion of the project's caseload includes legal immigrants who've recently lost Commonwealth Care coverage. The program will also reach out to young adult males ages 19 to 25, small business owners, and the recently unemployed.

Community Action of the Franklin, Hampshire, and North Quabbin Regions (North Worcester, Franklin, and Hampshire counties) was awarded \$20,000 to support the Healthy Connections program, which provides culturally competent services to residents of the North Quabbin region. The program engages in community outreach to educate low- and moderate-income residents about health coverage options, enrolls uninsured residents into public insurance programs, educates them about how health plans work, and assists in application renewals and follow-up.

Community Health Center of Franklin County (the 26 towns of rural Franklin County) was awarded \$20,000 to fund a Care Coordinator who will increase the health center's capacity to provide outreach and enrollment services to especially complex clients with multiple or exceptional access barriers or psychosocial needs, and in the process will improve the effectiveness of the existing program staff by streamlining their services.

Community Health Programs (CHP) (South and Central Berkshire County) was awarded \$20,000 to support the organization's mobile outreach/enrollment and retention work, which is primarily performed on their mobile outreach van, CHP on Wheels. An outreach worker will identify uninsured and underserved individuals and connect them with care, including evaluating their eligibility for

public insurance, enrolling them in insurance, navigating the health care system, and connecting them with a medical home at CHP. Targeted efforts will be directed at low-income, marginalized individuals of all ages, including many working adults ages 19-64.

Cooley Dickinson Hospital (Hampshire County and surrounding communities in Franklin and Hampden Counties) was awarded \$20,000 to support the Hampshire HealthConnect program, which will maintain the capacity for a five-day schedule of walk-in hours in Northampton and Amherst. Outreach activities will include a community health fair during “Cover the Uninsured Week,” revising and editing promotional and educational materials, and distributing materials through physician offices, local businesses, churches and career centers.

County of Dukes County (Dukes County) was awarded \$20,000 to support the Vineyard Health Care Access Program, which provides the only community-based health access service on Martha’s Vineyard. The target population includes low- to moderate-income residents, including seasonally employed workers, people with disabilities and/or chronic illnesses, and Brazilian immigrants with limited proficiency speaking English.

Ecu-Health Care (North Berkshire County) was awarded \$25,000 to support the continuation of one-on-one assistance to applicants in enrolling in all forms of publicly-subsidized coverage, as well as assistance with eligibility reviews, the enrollment process, and follow-up when difficulties are encountered. The program has established close working relationships with a number of state agencies, as well as area newspapers, broadcast media outlets, and businesses.

Joint Committee for Children’s Health Care in Everett (Everett, Chelsea, Revere, Malden, Somerville, and East Boston) was awarded \$25,000 to support outreach and enrollment initiatives with a particular focus on Latino residents, to increase the number of individuals informed about and enrolled in MassHealth, Commonwealth Care, Commonwealth Choice, and other health insurance plans. A collaborative will also be established with the African Community Health Initiatives in order to better reach the African immigrant population. Finally, the organization will publish and distribute an updated edition of Health Benefits for Children in multiple languages.

Latino Health Institute (Lowell, Lawrence, Haverhill and Methuen) was awarded \$20,000 to fund the hiring of a bilingual outreach specialist at the

organization's Lowell office to increase its capacity to reach, enroll, and retain individuals in health insurance plans. Outreach efforts will include the distribution of materials in community centers, churches, community health fairs and cultural events, and expand to Latinos and other racial and ethnic minorities residing in low- and moderate-income urban neighborhoods in the Merrimack Valley.

Manet Community Health Center (Quincy, Hull, Weymouth, Randolph, Milton, Braintree, Cohasset, Rockland, Holbrook, Scituate, Marshfield, and Plymouth County) was awarded \$20,000 to fund the Community Outreach Team, which educates individuals and families, including the newly unemployed, about their health insurance coverage options. The team will present to local community hospitals, career centers, food pantries, houses of worship, temples, neighborhood centers, housing authorities, community action programs, homeless organizations, and human service agencies.

Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers (Greater Boston and Framingham) was awarded \$20,000 to support the organization's work with community health care providers to break down barriers to care, and assist their linguistic minority population in accessing health care. The organization will provide education and awareness, community outreach, referrals to health care services, and assistance for individuals and families signing up for MassHealth, Commonwealth Care, and other health insurance programs.

The Mercy Hospital, Inc. (Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin Counties) was awarded \$20,000 to support the Health Care for the Homeless program, which helps those who are homeless and Vietnamese access health care services. A case manager will work with clients to access health coverage and related services, including transportation.

Metrowest Legal Services (Acton, Ashland, Bedford, Bellingham, Carlisle, Concord, Dedham, Dover, Foxborough, Framingham, Franklin, Holliston, Hopkinton, Hudson, Lexington, Lincoln, Marlborough, Maynard, Medfield, Medway, Millis, Natick, Needham, Norfolk, Norwood, Plainville, Sharon, Sherborn, Stow, Sudbury, Walpole, Wayland, Wellesley, Weston, Westwood, and Wrentham) was awarded \$25,000 to support the Health Access Project, which helps those trying to enroll in publicly-subsidized health insurance program, and provides them with legal advocacy and representation. A project paralegal will incorporate medical debt assistance and conduct outreach activities, presentations, mass mailings, and other initiatives, as well as hold

monthly office hours at the local office of the Department of Transitional Assistance. The paralegal will also advocate on administrative issues with the Connector Authority, the Office of Medicaid, and the Division of Health Care Finance and Policy.

Outer Cape Health Services, Inc. (Provincetown, Truro, Wellfleet, Eastham, Orleans, Brewster, Harwich, and Chatham) was awarded \$20,000 to support the Healthy Connections program, which assists uninsured and underinsured residents of the Lower and Outer Cape to enroll and re-enroll in health insurance coverage. As the only enrollment agency for individuals and families in these regions of Cape Cod, the organization assists residents who have seasonal employment, are self-employed, or employed by a small business that does not offer health coverage.

People Acting in Community Endeavors, Inc. (New Bedford, Acushnet, Dartmouth, Fairhaven, Rochester, Mattapoisett, and Marion) was awarded \$20,000 to support the organization's outreach, enrollment, and retention program, which is done in collaboration with various media, personal contact, other PACE programs and community agencies, and by targeting low wage earners in particular occupations, including day care providers, certified nursing assistants, and food service workers.

Roxbury Comprehensive Community Health Center (Roxbury and North Dorchester) was awarded \$20,000 to expand the organization's Enrollment, Outreach and Access to Care Project, which targets uninsured and underinsured minority individuals and families. The group will launch a public education campaign about the availability of publicly-subsidized health insurance plans through newspaper ads, posters, flyers, brochures, one-on-one outreach, information tables, community workshops and presentations, and community-wide events.

Stanley Street Treatment & Resources, Inc. (Greater Fall River, including the surrounding towns of Somerset, Swansea, Westport, Assonet, and Freetown) was awarded \$25,000 to support the Health Access Program, which will expand its efforts to serve newly documented residents in Fall River and its surrounding areas. The project will continue its outreach and enrollment, and assist with accessing primary care physicians and specialty care. Low-income and uninsured individuals and families are the target population, with an emphasis on the growing Brazilian and Hispanic populations.

Tapestry Health (Franklin, Hampshire, Berkshire, and Hampden Counties) was awarded \$20,000 to support the organization's outreach and enrollment program, which targets uninsured women, men, and families, with an emphasis on people who face issues of poverty, language, homelessness, racism, and social marginalization across the four counties of western Massachusetts. In addition, Tapestry will network with other health and human service agencies to provide education and information and expand their outreach.

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More 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. Through grants and policy initiatives, the Foundation works with public and private organizations to broaden health coverage and reduce barriers to care. It focuses on developing measurable and sustainable solutions that benefit uninsured, vulnerable, and low-income individuals and families in the Commonwealth, and served as a catalyst for the pioneering Massachusetts health care reform law passed in 2006. The Foundation was founded in 2001 with an initial endowment of \$55 million from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts. The Foundation operates separately from the company and is governed by its own 18-member Board of Directors. It is one of the largest private health philanthropies in New England and in 2007 was awarded the Paul Ylvisaker Award for Public Policy Engagement for its work on Massachusetts health care reform by the Council on Foundations.