

Connecting Consumers with Care

Program Goal

Connecting Consumers with Care will provide one-year grants to Massachusetts community-based organizations, community health centers and select hospital-based programs that help low-income consumers enroll in coverage, navigate the health care system, and access providers. The goal is to strengthen community-based efforts which provide a continuum of services that lead to health care access through public health coverage programs.

Context

Four years after the passage of health care reform in Massachusetts, the state maintains an unprecedented low uninsurance rate among its residents. Over 406,000 have obtained coverage through public programs including MassHealth and Commonwealth Care. As the state works to preserve these successes and ensure the health of its residents, a number of factors pose challenges. Consumers must navigate an array of coverage options, and submit extensive paperwork and documentation to prove their eligibility. Once consumers have obtained coverage, they need to demonstrate their continued eligibility through an annual redetermination process. The maintenance of coverage and retention of members have received increased attention and concerted efforts during recent years as a means of preserving the gains of coverage under health care reform.

Within the processes of applying for and obtaining coverage, there are numerous challenges. These include transportation, linguistic and cultural barriers, affordability, difficulty finding providers, and medical debt. Compounding these is the recent increase in the rates of unemployment among individuals and families, who now need public forms of coverage and need help to navigate the coverage options. Furthermore, the state is facing increased fiscal challenges, which contributes to uncertainty about the programs many rely on for coverage.

Funded organizations operate programs staffed by community health workers who have developed highly effective approaches to serving their community. Through outreach and education they engage those who remain uninsured or need help with their coverage options. They help consumers obtain appropriate coverage with extensive knowledge of the eligibility requirements and enrollment processes. Lastly, they ensure that consumers can access the care they need and help consumers as they redetermine their eligibility for coverage at least once each year.

Finally, the momentous passage of national health care reform provides an opportunity for Massachusetts in aligning its state law with the national level. As the national law is implemented, organizations funded in this area can largely inform the process, especially as it affects communities in understanding the changes to the health care system and in complying with various mandates.

Key Program Elements

Connecting Consumers with Care builds on a strong Massachusetts tradition of collaborative problem solving to help consumers secure health coverage and access comprehensive services in their community. This grant program supports organizations that provide a continuum of services including targeted outreach, eligibility screening, system navigation and educational help, re-determination support, and post-enrollment assistance to connect Massachusetts residents with needed health care.

Funded programs will, at a minimum, provide assistance to MassHealth and Commonwealth Care applicants in all phases of the eligibility determination process to connect with coverage plans and providers.

Key elements include:

- ❑ Community outreach to advise low- and moderate-income residents of potential eligibility in MassHealth, Commonwealth Care, Commonwealth Choice, the Health Safety Net, and other programs.
- ❑ Provision of culturally competent assistance to consumers in the areas of eligibility screening and verification, member education on public health coverage programs, assistance with plan and provider selection, education on preventive services, and follow-up to address any outstanding health access issues.
- ❑ Engaging in collaborative processes with MassHealth and Commonwealth Care providers to address access barriers, including administrative problems, transportation, language, and availability of specific services.
- ❑ Participation in the Massachusetts Health Care Training Forum and other forums to facilitate communication between community health worker programs and state agencies responsible for health access programs.

Eligible Applicants and Selection Criteria

Funding requests are invited from community organizations and providers with experience assisting consumers with eligibility for MassHealth, Commonwealth Care, the Health Safety Net, and other health care access programs.

Selection criteria include:

- ❑ Description of population in need of assistance.
- ❑ History of providing culturally competent and programmatically effective community outreach.
- ❑ Evidence of effectiveness in collaborative problem-solving involving community partners, providers, and state programs.
- ❑ Demonstrated capacity for fiscal accountability.
- ❑ Demonstrated capacity for documenting programmatic achievement and sharing lessons learned with other stakeholders.
- ❑ Demonstrated capacity for accurately tracking clients and reporting complete data for program evaluation purposes.
- ❑ Demonstrated capacity for utilizing electronic application methods.
- ❑ Evidence of sustainability and opportunities for replication.

Funding

Grants will range from \$20,000 to \$25,000 depending upon community size, level of need, and scope of services proposed. Hospital-based programs must indicate matching financial support from the hospital beyond in-kind contributions. Grantees will be required to maintain and submit to reporting requirements the Foundation specifically developed for this grant program, and to attend periodic grantee convenings.

Health care delivery organizations that currently receive BCBSMA Foundation grants focused on health disparities, children's mental health or the Catalyst Fund are still eligible to apply for the *Connecting Consumers with Care* grant area if a substantial number of uninsured Massachusetts residents are served. However, organizations may not receive concurrent funding from more than one Foundation *Access Grant* program. *Access Grant* programs include the **Innovation Fund for the Uninsured, Connecting Consumers with Care** and **Strengthening the Voice for Access**.

Deadlines and Submission Requirements

September 10
Letter of Inquiry

Only for organizations not currently funded in this program area: An original and six copies of a two-page pre-proposal Letter of Inquiry (LOI) briefly describing the project to determine suitability for funding are due by 5:00 p.m. **Please use the required LOI Cover Summary Form**, which is available to download at www.bluecrossfoundation.org. LOIs should be submitted by mail. **Please do not submit attachments and support materials with the LOI.**

*The Foundation will acknowledge receipt of the LOI within three business days. Please contact the Foundation **only** if you have not received confirmation after three business days of submission.*

September 24

Organizations being invited to submit a full proposal will be contacted.

October 15
Proposal

Only for current grantees seeking renewal and organizations whose LOIs have been accepted and are invited to apply: Seven collated stapled sets of the core materials and one set of attachments as listed below must be **received via mail by 5:00 p.m.**

The Foundation will acknowledge receipt of the proposal packet within three business days. Only complete proposal packets, including all letters of support, will be considered for funding. Unsolicited proposals will not be considered, and will be returned without being evaluated.

December 17 Grant awards announced.

Proposal Requirements

New Applicants: *Submit seven collated stapled copies of the core materials and one set of attachments, as listed below.*

Renewal Applicants: *Submit seven collated stapled copies of the core materials and one set of attachments, as listed below.*

Core Materials:

- **Proposal Cover Summary Form:** available for download from www.bluecrossfoundation.org
- **Narrative:** (must not exceed 10 pages, 11-12 pt. type on plain paper)
- a) Program Funding Request:**
 - Describe the organization's history and mission.
 - Describe the goals, objectives, and program design and implementation plan.
 - Describe the target population, including the number, profile and geographic area(s) for the persons served.
 - Describe how this request addresses the Key Program Elements described above.
 - Describe why your organization and staff is best qualified to manage the project for which funding is being sought (please do not include staff resumes).
 - Describe your organization's history of providing culturally competent care, engaging in collaborative problem solving, community outreach, and consumer involvement in program development and implementation.
 - Explain how your organization's work supports community-wide strategies for change and

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- a) Program Funding Request:**
 - Describe the program design and implementation plan, and highlight any differences from previous years.
 - Describe the target population, including the number of people served to date and anticipated in this grant period.
 - Describe how this request addresses the Key Program Elements described above.
 - Describe why your organization and staff is best qualified to manage the project for which funding is being sought (please do not include staff resumes).
 - Describe your organization's history of providing culturally competent care, engaging in collaborative problem solving, community outreach, and consumer involvement in program development and implementation.
 - Describe any significant staff or organizational changes that affect this program (please do not

improvement in health care.

b) Evaluation and Sustainability: Define your criteria for success with this program and how you will measure it. Describe the tools and strategies for measuring outcomes and effectiveness. If your program has developed a Logic Model, please feel free to include this in the proposal packet. Describe how the organization intends to sustain the program when this funding ends.

- **Project Budget Worksheet:** Utilizing the form available for download at www.bluecrossfoundation.org, include an annual budget for the funding being requested.
- **Organization Budget:** Board or department-approved budget for the year in which funding is being requested.
- **Letters of Support:** A minimum of three letters of support and confirmation of collaboration that illustrates your organization's capacity for making a measurable impact on the issue to be addressed by this program.

Attachments:

- **Current IRS letter confirming tax exempt status: 501(c)(3), 509(a).**
- **Most recent independent financial audits or accounts review.**
- **Hospitals are required to submit the most recent Community Benefits Report.**

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Foundation staff are willing to assist applicants submitting proposals by answering questions prior to submission of your complete packet. Please contact us at 617-246-3509 to schedule a technical assistance call prior to the proposal submission deadline. The Foundation will notify all applicants of the funding decisions before December 21, 2010.

Mailing or courier location:

BCBSMA Foundation
401 Park Drive, 4th Floor East
Boston, MA 02215

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation; Landmark Center, 401 Park Drive, Boston, MA 02215; 617-246-3744 (phone); 617-246-3992 (fax); www.bluecrossfoundation.org.