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**BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF MASSACHUSETTS FOUNDATION
COMMITTS \$3.4 MILLION IN GRANTS**

BOSTON – January 5, 2006 - The Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation (BCBSMAF) announced today grants totaling \$3.4 million over the next three years to improve access to health care for uninsured and low-income residents. Fifty-three organizations across the Commonwealth received funding to improve organization and continuity of care for the uninsured; help low-income consumers enroll in state-funded health insurance programs; and strengthen community-based advocacy activities.

“These grants are one of the most important ways that the Foundation helps to promote access to care for low-income and uninsured residents of Massachusetts,” said Foundation President Nancy Turnbull. “We are pleased to support these key organizations across the state that work hard to address barriers to care. While we are all hopeful that the current health reform discussions will result in a significant expansion of coverage, ongoing efforts to improve access for low-income and uninsured residents must also continue.”

The Foundation’s total grantmaking in Massachusetts during this period will support:

- 20 health care organizations, with up to three-year commitments, totaling \$2.4 million (\$1.2 million to be awarded in 2005) to support models for developing, expanding, or sustaining coordinated care for the uninsured;
- 21 community organizations, with one-year grants, totaling \$405,000 to support efforts to screen and, if possible, enroll low-income persons for public health insurance programs, navigate the health care system, and connect them to care;
- 12 advocacy organizations, with one-year grants, totaling \$520,000 to statewide support policy initiatives that promote the interests of the uninsured.

Awards were made to organizations in regions throughout the Commonwealth: 17 in Boston, MetroBoston, and MetroWest; 13 in Central and Western Massachusetts; eight in the Southeast and on Cape Cod; and three on the North Shore and in the Merrimack Valley. Examples of the types of programs supported by these grants include:

Cambridge Health Alliance, who received a commitment of \$225,000 over the next three years, will provide coordinated care for political violence survivors (PVSs), including torture survivors, refugees, and trafficking victims. This is the second major Foundation grant awarded that focuses on this vulnerable population (last year, Boston

Medical Center was awarded \$225,000). Funding will enable a multidisciplinary group of providers, trained in the specific health care needs of PVSs, to provide a regular and continued source of medical and mental health care. They will collaborate with International Institute of Boston and Institute for Community Health.

Following an implementation grant, **Lowell Community Health Center** will receive \$130,000 over the next two years to improve the integration of care for uninsured Greater Lowell residents. The program will increase access to specialty care, reduce cultural barriers, promote enrollment in public insurance programs or if necessary offer sliding-fee-scale payment, and promote preventive health care. The health center will collaborate with Lowell General Hospital, Saints Memorial Medical Center, Visiting Nurses Association of Greater Lowell, and the Lowell Health Department.

Outer Cape Health Services, Inc. was awarded continued funding of \$25,000 to support their *Healthy Connections* program, which offers outreach, enrollment, and post-enrollment services for MassHealth members. The program has been in effect since 1997, and has an ongoing case load of more than 2,000 low-income and uninsured households. Funding will help to support the work of an additional bilingual/ bicultural Community Health Coordinator.

Tapestry Health Systems was awarded \$15,000 for a program to conduct outreach and enrollment for MassHealth. This organization will work in Western Massachusetts and will focus on adults aged 19-39, women, and Latinos. Additionally, the program will provide counseling, education, system navigation, and health care referrals.

Massachusetts Immigrant & Refugee Advocacy Network will receive renewal funding of \$50,000 to restore access to health care, ameliorate health outcome disparities, and improve the quality of care for immigrants through the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Campaign for Long-term Equality (MIRACLE) campaign. They will use their institutional organizing framework to activate a network of district-based activists into grassroots efforts to educate elected officials about the need to improve access to health care for immigrants and refugees in the Commonwealth, especially for the more than 7,000 legal immigrants who lost access to health insurance.

Health Law Advocates was awarded renewed funding of \$40,000 to support ongoing efforts, such as improving access to dental care, improving access to children's mental health services, assisting divorcing women maintain their coverage after the divorce, and expanding its Legal Network to provide pro bono legal services to consumers denied access to health care. The organization often provides legal counsel to individual clients and grassroots coalitions, as well as serves as a general advocate for Massachusetts residents who are experiencing difficulty accessing medical services.

Since its inception in 2001, the BCBSMAF (www.bcbsmafoundation.org) has committed grants totaling \$19 million to 199 organizations, and developed numerous policy initiatives to expand access to health care for the uninsured and low-income individuals and families in Massachusetts. The Foundation is governed by its own 17-member Board

of Directors and operates separately from the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (BCBSMA) corporation. BCBSMA contributed an initial endowment of \$55 million in 2001. The endowment is now more than \$75 million, making the BCBSMA Foundation one of the largest health philanthropies in the state.

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