



Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation awards \$2.315 million in grants to help Mass. residents access health coverage

BOSTON, January 7, 2009 — The Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation has awarded \$2.315 million in grants to 55 community-based organizations, community health centers, and select hospital-based programs to help expand access to health care for low-income and vulnerable residents of the state. The grants range from \$20,000 to \$95,000.

“Although the state’s rate of uninsurance is at an historic low, there is still much work to do in helping people, particularly those who are new to the health care system, access care providers,” said Jarrett T. Barrios, President of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation. “In these difficult times, 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 three program areas established by the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation in 2001. *The Innovation Fund for the Uninsured* supports organizations working to improve the organization, continuity, and completeness of care for the uninsured. *Connecting Consumers with Care* supports organizations working to strengthen community-based efforts designed to ensure consumers understand, enroll, and maintain health coverage under public and private health access programs, and utilize the health care services to which they are entitled. And *Strengthening the Voice for Access* supports organizations working to strengthen community-based policy activities, increase citizen participation in public policy development, and promote collaboration among statewide policy and advocacy organizations on health access issues for uninsured and low-income people.

THE INNOVATION FUND FOR THE UNINSURED

Behavioral Health Networks (Springfield) was awarded \$75,000 to implement a Jail Diversion Program to connect the mental health and court systems through a case management system for the mentally ill, developmentally disabled, and/or substance abusing individuals who have committed a minor crime. The program will establish a case manager who will create a coordinated care system of mental health and substance abuse treatment services, integrated with primary care and social supports, which the courts can use as an alternative to jail, when appropriate.

Boston Health Care for the Homeless was awarded \$65,000 to implement a program integrating the primary care and behavioral health care services offered to Greater Boston's homeless population, with the goal of ensuring that a greater proportion of homeless individuals receive timely, appropriate care.

Dimock Community Health Center (Boston) was awarded \$65,000 to implement a Diabetes Health Life Initiative that will provide patient navigator services to black and Latino diabetic patients. The program will allow Dimock to more fully integrate its diabetes-related services so that more patients have access to all services. The grant will also be used to support efforts focused on uninsured individuals.

Dotwell was awarded \$90,000 to continue its case management infrastructure that assists uninsured patients and ensure they have continual contact with the health center through case managers who monitor their health status. This program model is the result of comprehensive planning and treats health insurance status as a "vital sign" by organizing grant funded and institutional resources to engage uninsured patients who are at greater risk for discontinuing care.

Family Health Center of Worcester was awarded \$75,000 to convert its urgent-care center, which currently serves nearly 3,000 uninsured patients, into a walk-in primary care and social services clinic. The transition will allow uninsured patients to enter into a relationship with a primary care provider and assist with other services that will help the uninsured view the Family Health Center as a medical home.

Great Brook Valley Health Center (Worcester) was awarded \$72,500 to fund a specialized, bilingual, bicultural Social Services Case Manager to assist patients on the Health Safety Net and those transitioning off of Refugee Medical

Assistance. The case manager will work with patients of the health center with complex barriers to care and unusually dire needs.

Greater New Bedford Community Health Center was awarded \$65,000 to revamp its chronic disease management and care coordination systems. The new system will network primary care providers so they can more easily use evidence-based strategies in patient care with support from dedicated case management workers. The target population for this initiative includes uninsured patients with diabetes, hypertension, and asthma.

HealthFirst Family Care Center (Fall River) was awarded \$65,000 to implement a system that will facilitate access to continuous and coordinated primary care for the area's homeless population. Components of the program will include establishing a medical home for homeless individuals, forming partnerships with organizations to facilitate access, provider service referrals, and developing an "open access" scheduling system to accommodate appointments with homeless patients.

Hilltown Community Health Center (Worthington and Huntington) was awarded \$65,000 to create a medical home for those residing in the Hilltown region and who remain uninsured post-health reform. This program is engaging 300-400 individuals through a coordinated set of activities at two community health centers by expanding their capacity to supportively engage uninsured patients and provide a broad array of services. Key components of the program include additional community health worker staff and medical specialists, and expansion of preventive and education services.

Holyoke Health Center was awarded \$72,500 to implement a set of coordinated strategies that extend care into the community and minimize disruptions to access. A nurse case manager will work with the uninsured population of Holyoke and Chicopee to evaluate individuals referred by community partner organizations. Those patients requiring urgent care will be treated accordingly and those able to wait for a primary care appointment will be supported by a patient navigator to take charge of their health through the Health Center's various wellness and patient education programs available in the community.

Joseph M. Smith Community Health Center (Brighton) was awarded \$70,000 to expand care coordination services for uninsured adults aged 20-39 and those over age 65. The program will serve approximately 1,500 patients annually and will include assessments of barriers to care faced by these patients and the

development of individual preventive service plans that include follow up with patients.

Justice Resource Institute was awarded \$60,000 to continue efforts focused on improving the continuity and completeness of care for an uninsured population facing numerous access barriers. The target populations include homeless youth and young adults in downtown Boston, with a special focus on those who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. The program uses outreach/health care navigators to target high need areas of Boston. The navigators establish access for the target populations in community settings and continue seamlessly into JRI's clinical setting, the Sidney Borum Jr. Health Center.

Lowell Community Health Center was awarded \$75,000 to implement the Lowell Health Compass Program, which will help immigrant communities in Greater Lowell access the health care system. Through the program, the Lowell Community Health Center will develop a team of patient navigators and integrate them into the center's primary care delivery system and coordinate a network of organizations that will facilitate access to care and education about health care issues for uninsured immigrants in the Greater Lowell area.

Lynn Community Health Center was awarded \$95,000 to continue implementing a case management model for uninsured adults with serious chronic disease. After a planning year where the health center reviewed hundreds of patient files and contacted uninsured patients the health center designed a Chronic Care Management Team. The team includes nurse case managers, community health workers, and a nutritionist to provide coordinated care services for chronically ill patients suffering from depression and diabetes. LCHC is collecting significant data about those patients and is demonstrating the efficacy of this approach on the patients and the community.

Partners in Life (Boston) was awarded \$65,000 to develop a Transition to Primary Care program for inmates nearing release from the Suffolk County House of Correction. Prior to release, inmates will receive an initial primary care visit via telemedicine and schedule an in-person appointment at Shattuck Hospital. For six months after their release, the program will intensively track and support patients in maintaining health coverage and assist with negotiating barriers to care. The program is expected to serve 200 people annually.

South End Community Health Center (Boston) was awarded \$55,000 to implement Comp Care, a program that will provide a medical home with

integrated medical and mental health services for homeless, uninsured patients; female detainees in the Suffolk County correctional system, and uninsured Latinos in the Greater Boston area. Comp Care will create patients teams consisting of a nurse case manager and community outreach worker.

Volunteers in Medicine, Berkshires was awarded \$60,000 to expand case management services at its free care clinic. The clinic offers preventive services in mental health, and primary and dental care. The clinic expansion will include the development of a case management model that integrates clinical services, outreach, pharmacy services, and quality assurance. A primary focus will be placed on culturally competent care.

CONNECTING CONSUMERS WITH CARE

African Community Health Initiatives (Boston) was awarded \$25,000 to support the *Early Intervention/Community Referral Program* which provides triage services to African immigrants and refugees, increases awareness of health insurance coverage programs, and refers clients to providers. Clients are screened for programs including MassHealth and Commonwealth Care, and often times, taken to the services that they need.

Berkshire Health Systems (Pittsfield) was awarded \$20,000 to support a Healthcare Specialist in the *Advocacy for Access* program. The Specialist will provide services in the inpatient Substance Abuse and Inpatient Psychiatric units of Berkshire Medical Center, as well as enrollment and follow-up to the Berkshire County House of Corrections and the Community Corrections Department. Rural uninsured working adults and individuals with special needs, such as disabilities, behavioral health issues, or correctional status, will be assisted, along with the Spanish-speaking population.

The Boston Public Health Commission was awarded \$25,000 to support the *Health Care Access Project*, which serves Vietnamese, Black, and Latino low-income and immigrant populations. Outreach will be conducted in auto body shops, nail salons, and Earned Income Tax Credit tax preparation sites. In addition to assisting clients with navigating the health care system and obtaining a primary care provider, the program will assist individuals with establishing a medical home and will work to address larger public health issues, such as reducing pollution and chemical exposure for immigrant workers.

Brockton Neighborhood Health Center was awarded \$25,000 to support the continuation of a train-the-trainer model whereby community leaders receive

information about applying for and maintaining health care coverage. Information is also incorporated on prevention and wellness, and continuity of care and coverage for newly insured individuals.

Cambodian Mutual Assistance of Greater Lowell was awarded \$20,000 to support outreach and community education to inform clients of health care reform and available public health coverage programs, as well as application assistance. Members will be reached through communication channels, including Khmer radio, public-access cable television, and community forums. Additionally, the organization will conduct focus groups to assess community awareness of the health care reform law, and why some may not have applied for coverage yet.

Child Care Resource Center (Cambridge) was awarded \$20,000 to support a Health Access Specialist, who connects with families and individuals with young children who contact the organization for referrals to child care, as well as child care providers, with health insurance coverage. The organization screens all clients on their health coverage status, and refers individuals needing assistance. The agency will also author and adapt a broader inventory of health coverage materials for their clients.

Community Action Committee of Cape Cod & Islands, Inc. (Hyannis) was awarded \$25,000 to support a Health Outreach Educator, who will provide outreach and enrollment in the VNA Mobile Health Van of the *HOPE Project*. Outreach and marketing activities will target Brazilian and Hispanic communities, as well as Asian, Native American, and seasonal and immigrant workers from Jamaica, Pakistan, Russia, and Bulgaria. The project seeks to reach young-adult males, small business owners, and recently unemployed workers.

Community Action of the Franklin, Hampshire, and North Quabbin Regions (Greenfield) was awarded \$20,000 to support the *Healthy Connections* program, which is being merged with the *Community Action First Call for Help* program, in response to the challenging economic climate. *First Call for Help* works to meet the health care needs of residents in the North Quabbin region and reaches low- and moderate-income residents with health care information, assistance with health coverage issues or applications, and enrolls residents into public health insurance programs.

Community Health Connections, Inc. (Fitchburg) was awarded \$20,000 to support a bilingual/bicultural Outreach and Enrollment Coordinator, who will

provide outreach, enrollment assistance, and ongoing case management to individuals and families with barriers to care and at risk of losing their health insurance. Outreach will be conducted in restaurants, businesses, public schools, and child care programs. Additionally, communication and collaboration with health care providers, area social service agencies, and state agencies will be maintained to reduce barriers for newly enrolled applicants, generate referrals, and follow-up.

County of Dukes County (Martha's Vineyard) was awarded \$20,000 to support a Health Access Specialist and a bilingual Community Health Outreach Educator in the *Vineyard Health Care Access Program*, who will provide enrollment services to the island's low- and moderate-income residents, and work to minimize gaps in care as they impact the cycle of coverage among residents. Staff will educate clients on how to establish a primary medical home and appropriate use of the emergency room for points of care. A comprehensive outreach campaign in collaboration with local tax preparers will also take place during the 2009 tax season to reach the uninsured population.

Duffy Health Center (Hyannis) was awarded \$20,000 to support the health center's Benefit Coordinator, who serves individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness and enrolls them into state programs, including MassHealth. Clients also receive referral coordination, which often leads them to housing, detox, counseling, and other services. Clients are ensured continued access to care through the encouragement of preventive services and assistance with follow-up issues.

Ecu-Health Care (North Adams) was awarded \$25,000 to support the maintenance of comprehensive public health insurance outreach and enrollment with one-on-one assistance and follow-up, as well as the institution of a broadcast and print media outreach campaign to inform the public of available health coverage programs. The organization will provide individualized enrollment assistance, and help residents in navigating the health care system including finding a primary care physician. Finally, Ecu-Health Care will assist with follow-up and evaluation of the steps involved in the enrollment process. Funding will allow for the organization to continue its widespread media campaign, of which it already has an extensive list of sources, to post various advertisements about the health care reform law, and publicize services offered by the organization.

The Joint Committee for Children's Health Care in Everett was awarded \$25,000 to support outreach to the Latino population, as well as expanding the organization's efforts to the African-American population. The Joint Committee will collaborate with 30 organizational partners to conduct a series of educational forums for parents, implement a culturally competent media campaign, and provide individualized assistance to families at their offices and in the community, such as in churches. The program will also mobilize six bilingual Volunteer Health Advisors, thus enhancing their reach linguistically and culturally.

Manet Community Health Center (Quincy) was awarded \$20,000 to support the *Community Outreach Program*, which provides services to diverse populations including Asian, Arabic, and Brazilian communities. Services are provided to ensure linguistic and cultural competence. The program seeks to raise awareness and offer education in preventive and primary care, navigating the complex health care system, as well as offering information about the new standards of Minimum Creditable Coverage. The program participates in numerous South Shore events and collaborates with the many social service providers in the region.

Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers (Cambridge) was awarded \$20,000 to support efforts connecting the Brazilian and Cape Verdean communities to health care services through the provision of culturally and linguistically appropriate assistance. Immigrant case workers will provide outreach, community education, referrals to health care services, eligibility assistance, and system navigation.

The Mercy Hospital, Inc. (Springfield) was awarded \$20,000 to support services to provide at least 200 uninsured homeless and Vietnamese individuals with health insurance coverage and post-enrollment services. Additionally, the program seeks to address and eliminate barriers within the health care system that hinder an individual's ability to easily access care. The staff person whom this funding supports will advocate for systemic change, as well as collaborate with many community organizations.

Metrowest Legal Services (Framingham) was awarded \$25,000 to support a Project Paralegal who works with clients from the application through appeal processes. The Paralegal works in close collaboration with a Translator Advocate to provide services for the Brazilian population in the Metrowest region. Additionally, the Paralegal will work with clients on medical debt issues,

assisting clients to work with hospital billing services to establish debt reduction payments or discount bills. The Paralegal will attend at least six outreach activities throughout the year, along with establishing a presence at the local Department of Transitional Assistance office to expand the reach of the agency.

Outer Cape Health Services, Inc. (North Eastham) was awarded \$25,000 to support *Healthy Connections*, the only enrollment agency for individuals and families on the Lower and Outer regions of Cape Cod. The program seeks to target the remaining uninsured population in the Barnstable County region, and provide them with health insurance eligibility determinations, enrollment assistance, help finding primary care and dental providers, referrals to social service agencies, and prevention education. The program seeks to assist individuals signing up for coverage amidst the increasingly acute shortage of primary care providers on the Cape. Many clients are seasonal workers, and so encounter the added complexities of demonstrating eligibility with fluctuating income criteria.

People Acting in Community Endeavors, Inc. (New Bedford) was awarded \$20,000 to support continued outreach and enrollment assistance services, and the documentation of health plan selection processes of clients, ensuring that connections are made between clients and physicians. Many in the target population are non-elderly adults who are long-term uninsured, linguistic minorities, and undocumented workers in the Greater New Bedford area. Outreach efforts will be made via media channels, personal contact, and in collaboration with other agencies and small businesses.

Stanley Street Treatment & Resources, Inc. (Fall River) was awarded \$25,000 for the *Health Access Program*, which provides outreach, eligibility determinations, and navigation assistance to individuals in Fall River and surrounding communities, and establishes partnerships with local agencies to problem-solve issues that arise for clients. A significant portion of the population is Portuguese-speaking, with the Brazilian and Hispanic populations needing substantial assistance with obtaining access to health care. In particular, the recently unemployed will be targeted, as well as a new referral partnership established with probation officers from the second district court. Through these referrals, the agency anticipates a decrease in dependence on the Health Safety Net, and therefore decreased costs on the system.

Steppingstone, Inc. (Fall River) was awarded \$20,000 to support *Project ACTION*, which assists low- and moderate-income clients to obtain health

insurance and access primary care services, and receives referrals from one of ten Steppingstone programs, which serve up to 150 substance abuse individuals. The program is based around raising consciousness in the substance abuse treatment community of health coverage issues; ongoing staff education; case management coordination; and the work of culturally competent staff. *Project ACCTION* will utilize four education groups to educate and raise awareness among clients on issues of obtaining, maintaining, and understanding how to utilize services.

Tapestry Health (Florence) was awarded \$20,000 to support the implementation of various strategies to assist and enroll eligible and uninsured western Massachusetts residents into health coverage programs, including MassHealth, Commonwealth Care, the Women's Health Network, and Commonwealth Choice. Many clients are disproportionately affected by poverty, homelessness, and addiction. Through ten clinical sites, the program will utilize bilingual social marketing strategies, conduct outreach, and disseminate information.

STRENGTHENING THE VOICE FOR ACCESS

Community Partners (Amherst) was awarded \$50,000 to continue its work with frontline health workers and health access stakeholders through its Health Access Network program. Community Partners has taken a lead in assisting organizations conducting outreach and enrollment into public health coverage programs through online information exchanges, in-person regional meetings, and in-person and online statewide training sessions. They will continue to define and advocate core issues in the implementation of health reform.

The Disability Policy Consortium was awarded \$30,000 to continue its work as one of the few statewide, cross-disability organization active in the Massachusetts policy arena. It focuses on reducing health care disparities rooted in disability. They will focus on issues of insurance and access to care.

The Greater Boston Interfaith Organization was awarded \$50,000 to continue its work with 70 religious congregations and organizations in the Greater Boston area to promote social justice in the area of health care access. The Greater Boston Interfaith Organization works with approximately 50,000 people, many of whom are under- or uninsured and helps give voice to the need for insurance affordability.

Health Care for All was awarded \$50,000 to continue its work building a movement of empowered people and organizations to create a health care system that is responsive to the needs of all people, including those who are most

vulnerable. Health Care for All's leadership played a key role in bringing the consumer voice to health care reform and has been vigilant in monitoring the implementation of health reform and keeping affordability at the top of the agenda.

Health Law Advocates was awarded \$40,000 to continue its legal representation of vulnerable residents who have been denied access to health care. Its current priorities include monitoring the implementation of the health reform law; increasing attorney and client involvement in the *pro bono* Legal Network; improving access to dental care; and improving access to mental health services for children.

The Massachusetts Association of Community Health Workers (Shrewsbury) was awarded \$40,000 to continue its work organizing community health workers around the state. In 2009, the organization will conduct 10 regional trainings to improve advocacy skills of community health workers and continue its work promoting health care policy development.

The Massachusetts Coalition of School-Based Health Centers was awarded \$30,000 to continue improving children's access to health care through school-based health centers partnered with hospitals, community health centers, and public health departments. Currently, 20,000 children receive health care services through school-based centers. They will work to strengthen and expand the network and to advocate in support of these clinics.

Massachusetts Correctional Legal Services was awarded \$35,000 to continue its work as the only organization in the state advocating for the health care needs of the Commonwealth's 25,000 prisoners. In 2009, the organization will run the Improving Prisoner Access to Health Care program, which investigates health care deficiencies and facilitates timely interventions.

The Massachusetts Housing & Shelter Alliance was awarded \$30,000 to continue its work advocating for the health care needs of homeless adults. A priority in 2009 will be to build on its "Home and Healthy for Good" program for ending homelessness and supporting housing-based service delivery systems that stabilize housing and produce long-term improvements in health.

The Massachusetts Immigrant & Refugee Advocacy Coalition was awarded \$50,000 to continue its advocacy for immigrants and refugees across the Commonwealth. A priority in 2009 will be its work to support immigrant voice

in advocating for equitable access to health care and restore access to health insurance benefits for legal immigrants.

The Massachusetts Law Reform Institute was awarded \$45,000 to continue its work preparing legal analyses and promoting policy education around the implementation of health reform, regulating the Safety Net Trust Fund, and improving the operations of MassHealth, the state's Medicaid program.

The Mass. League of Community Health Centers was awarded \$45,000 to continue its advocacy and organizing on behalf of the state's 52 community health centers. The League will work to monitor health system changes that impact community health centers and their patients. In particular their 2009 will include stabilizing funding mechanisms that have changed with health reform.

The Massachusetts Senior Action Council was awarded \$40,000 to continue to protect, reform, and increase the enrollment of seniors in Medicare and Prescription Advantage. A priority in 2009 will be achieving prescription drug affordability and quality home care for seniors with long-term illnesses.

Neighbor to Neighbor (Boston, Worcester, Fitchburg, Leominster, Holyoke, and Springfield) was awarded \$35,000 to continue its work advocating for and organizing low-income residents, especially around health access issues. A focus in 2009 will be on issues of affordability.

The Pro-Choice Massachusetts Foundation was awarded \$25,000 to work on eliminating barriers to reproductive health care services. In 2009, they will expand the engagement of low income women and women of color, and document barriers to access in various communities in Massachusetts. They will work to ensure that women's health issues are an integral part of health reform.

The Voice and Future Fund was awarded \$40,000 to continue its work educating low-wage workers, particularly immigrants, about their health access rights and responsibilities. In 2009, they will continue to work with employers to expand employer sponsored health insurance for low wage workers.