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BOSTON — The Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation will host a conference on improving access to children's behavioral health Thursday, October 29.

Although Massachusetts has the highest rate of psychiatrists and social workers per 100,000 residents than any other state, a survey of children's mental health providers and stakeholders funded by the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation found that advocates, pediatricians, and families report significant difficulties in finding clinicians, receiving timely appointments, and recruiting clinicians to their workplace.

"Children impacted by mental illness cannot fend for themselves. We need to find ways to meet their needs," said Anya Rader Wallack, Interim President of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation. "Obstacles to care include the need to find a provider who doesn't just treat children, but has experience with the child's age group, needs, and severity of illness. Then there's the issue of whether the provider accepts insurance, has openings when the child and family are available, and is located conveniently for an ongoing course of treatment."

The report, *Assessing Children's Mental Health Services in Massachusetts: Workforce Capacity Assessment*, will be released at the October 29 conference. The conference will also feature clinicians, advocates, and parents talking about the biggest challenges to treating children in need of mental health care. The conference will take place at Sheraton Boston from 8 a.m. to noon.

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.

