



  **BlueCross  
BlueShield**  
THE HEALTH OF AMERICA<sup>SM</sup>

# 2021 Community Investment Report





## A Letter from Our CEO

Your health shouldn't depend on your race, ethnicity, income status, identity or where you live—but all too often it does. The health disparities that have for too long affected too many people across the country have only been exacerbated by the pandemic in recent years. Blue Cross and Blue Shield (BCBS) companies are determined to change this. Driven by our deep roots in the local communities we serve—and enabled by the scope of our national reach—we are hard at work in every corner of the country to ensure *all* Americans are able to live their healthiest lives.

We know that 80% of a person's health is shaped outside of traditional systems of care—by things like food security, housing stability and safe neighborhoods. Addressing these issues is a cornerstone of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association's National Health Equity Strategy, launched in 2021 to confront the nation's crisis in health disparities. With a focus on these root causes and a rich understanding of local needs and resources, BCBS companies are making meaningful strides toward a healthier and more equitable future.


Within this report, you will find stories demonstrating our pursuit to improve social determinants of health. Together, we are reimagining a more equitable health care system—for the one in three Americans we serve and all Americans.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kim A. Keck". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kim A. Keck  
President and CEO  
Blue Cross Blue Shield Association

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# Serving Our Communities, For the Health of America

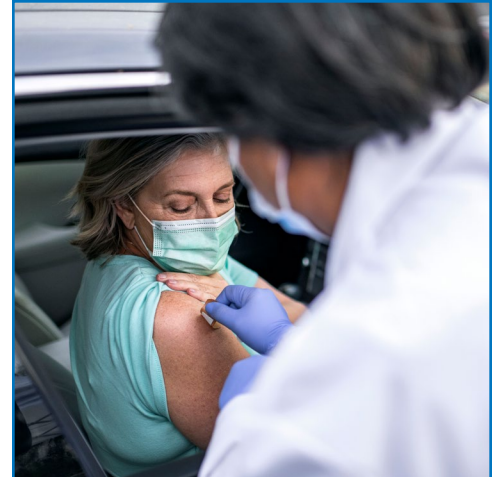
Through corporate giving and foundation investments, BCBS companies create programs and support community partnerships that have a great impact on the health and well-being of our local communities – driving more equitable care for all Americans.

## COMMUNITY BY COMMUNITY

Since 1929, BCBS companies have provided health care coverage to members, allowing them to live free of worry—and free of fear. BCBS companies understand the needs of local communities while providing health care coverage that opens doors for more than 114 million members in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico.

## SUPPORTING HEALTHIER LIVING FOR ALL

As we emerged from a global pandemic, BCBS companies and their foundations continued to support, invest in, and build programs and partnerships that have the greatest impact on the health and well-being of all Americans. Throughout 2021, in every ZIP code in America, BCBS companies and foundations were there for you, for your neighbors, for the Health of America.



## Leading through a Public Health Crisis

Since the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, BCBS companies have been steadfast partners in our communities. From providing billions of dollars in the response effort and community support and distributing personal protective equipment (PPE), to sharing accurate, trusted health information, BCBS companies offered a neighborly, helping hand as Americans weathered the crisis.

### \$12.8B

COLLECTIVELY INVESTED IN  
PANDEMIC RECOVERY EFFORTS

### \$315M

COLLECTIVELY CONTRIBUTED  
TO COMMUNITY-BASED  
NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

### 2M+

SENIOR CITIZENS VACCINATED  
IN LESS THAN 100 DAYS

## 2021 COMMUNITY IMPACT:

### \$489M

INVESTED IN COMMUNITY  
HEALTH INITIATIVES

### \$19M

IN DISASTER  
RELIEF EFFORTS

### \$20M

IN EMPLOYEE  
DONATIONS

### 374K HOURS

OF EMPLOYEE  
VOLUNTEER TIME

### 1M PEOPLE SERVED

AT COMMUNITY  
HEALTH EVENTS

(health screenings,  
education & vaccinations)

### 1.5M POUNDS

OF FOOD DONATED/  
SERVED

# Confronting the Nation's Crisis in Racial Health Disparities



**BCBSA's National Health Equity Strategy** is aimed at changing the trajectory of health disparities so that all Americans can live their healthiest, most fulfilling lives.

- Collecting data to measure disparities and changing the standard for data collection and measurement regarding health equity
- Incorporating measurements into BCBS quality standards programs
- Scaling effective programs
- Working with providers to improve outcomes and address unconscious bias
- Changing payment paradigms to support enhanced equity

This multiyear strategy focuses on conditions that disproportionately affect marginalized communities—starting with a goal of **reducing maternal health disparities by 50% in five years** and addressing the mental health crisis in the country.\*

## Setting a Goal to Address Racial Disparities in Maternal Health

U.S. pregnancy and childbirth complications rose sharply in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Racial and ethnic disparities in these complications persist. For example, Black women are three times more likely to die from childbirth complications than White women, and face a 70% higher risk of severe maternal morbidity (SMM), or life-threatening events, than any other racial groups—often related to conditions that require close attention throughout a woman's pregnancy.

BCBSA and BCBS companies are taking bold action to make a measurable, meaningful difference for mothers and babies:

- 1) RESEARCH:** Three Health of America® Reports – released in 2020, 2021 and 2022 identifying trends in pregnancy and childbirth complications
- 2) DATA:** Industry leadership to create and improve national data standards, including collection of race, ethnicity, language (REL); and social needs, sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI)
- 3) ADVOCACY:** Public sector advocacy on behalf of mothers and babies, including the Congressional Black Maternal Health Caucus' Omnibus package
- 4) THOUGHT LEADERSHIP:** Creation of 10 tangible steps organization can adopt to improve maternal health outcomes and create measurable change
- 5) ACTION:** BCBS company and foundation investment in programs and community partnerships that address social determinants of health driving chronic conditions often at the root of pregnancy and childbirth complications

# BCBSA Leverages National Partnerships to Advance Equity and Support Maternal Health

Strong national and local partnerships are at the heart of our mission to address disparities and improve health outcomes for all Americans. BCBSA is collaborating with key organizations that are providing expertise and insight to shape our national health equity strategy, including a National Advisory Panel, comprised of experienced, highly regarded national leaders in health equity and community.

## MARCH OF DIMES

- BCBS companies have made implicit bias training available across more than 25 states and Washington, D.C.
- To-date, BCBS companies have partnered with nearly 4,000 health care providers, midwives, nurses, social workers, students and other health care professionals to offer implicit bias training with the March of Dimes.
- More than 25 hospitals and three nursing schools have had the opportunity to receive the BCBS-funded training, with more receiving the training in the future as the partnership expands.



## NATIONAL MINORITY QUALITY FORUM (NMQF)

- BCBSA is partnering with the National Minority Quality Forum (NMQF) to convene a diverse community of stakeholders interested in advancing health equity through better data.
- The goal is to create an open dialogue around industry standards for the collection and use of race, ethnicity and language (REL) data and sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) data.
- Collection of this data will benefit patients by allowing the health care ecosystem to identify and address health disparities through programs and interventions that are tailored to augment community health, promote access and deliver culturally appropriate care.



## HEALTH EQUITY ADVISORY PANEL:



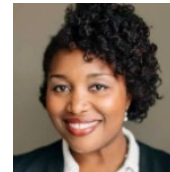
**Marshall Chin,  
MD, MPH**

University of Chicago



**Gilbert Darrington**

Health Services, Incorporated



**Adaeze Enekwechi,  
PhD, MPP**

George Washington University



**Rachel R. Hardeman,  
PhD, MPH**

University of Minnesota



**Robert Gabbay,  
MD Ph.D**

American Diabetes Association



**Maria S. Gomez,  
RN, MPH**

Mary's Center



**Stacey D. Stewart**

March of Dimes



**Richard Taylor**

ImbuTec

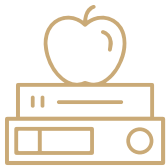


## Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)



### ECONOMIC STABILITY

The poverty rate in America is 11.4% according to recent census figures. That is why Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies are committed to supporting individuals and families with programs and initiatives focused on economic stability. There are many factors that impact health outside of the doctor's office. Among the most important issues is employment, which has a direct correlation with housing, childcare, food, health care and education.



### EDUCATION ACCESS AND QUALITY

Reducing health inequities begins with an understanding of how education and health are connected. Studies show that access to educational opportunities can lead to improved health and longer lives. Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies are committed to helping individuals and families attain better health by removing barriers to education.



### HEALTH CARE ACCESS AND QUALITY

Improving access to health care is a key driver that improves the health outcomes for Americans. The challenges range from access to doctors in rural communities to transportation and those living without insurance. Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies are dedicated to supporting programs that increase access to high-quality health care.



### NEIGHBORHOOD AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Where you live can have an impact on your overall health. Systemic policies have had lasting impact for generations that have created barriers to better health for communities. Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies are collaborating with public and private stakeholders to address policy solutions at the local state and federal level as well as promote healthy living and safety to positively impact overall quality of life in our communities.



### SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Community is an important part of overall health. Our interactions with family, friends, neighbors and co-workers create a social support network. It is critical that interventions support positive relationships for adults and children. Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies are driving innovation and supporting community organizations to promote stronger communities and mental health, especially as the country continues to navigate the impact of isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

# Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama

## MEDICAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

[www.AlabamaBlue.com](http://www.AlabamaBlue.com)



The majority of Alabama's counties do not have enough primary care and behavioral health physicians. To address this statewide need, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama (BCBS Alabama) continues to invest in the future of its Primary Care Physician Network by providing scholarship opportunities. Since 2016, BCBS Alabama has **awarded over \$7 million to 109 medical students in medical scholarship funds**. As a condition of these scholarships, the recipients agree to practice as primary care or behavioral health physicians in underserved areas of Alabama after graduation.

### PROGRAM IMPACT:

- 6** Scholarship recipients in practice
- 15** New physicians scheduled to begin summer 2022
- 160** Statewide goal for primary doctors in underserved, rural communities

"Edward Via Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM) is grateful to Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama for its foresight of and understanding about the importance of encouraging students to return to practice medicine in medically underserved areas of Alabama. This generous, multi-year commitment by BCBS Alabama enriches VCOM's scholarship program, decreases student debt and enables VCOM students to fulfill the college's mission of returning graduates to rural and medically underserved areas in Alabama."

– Dixie Tooke-Rawlins, president and provost, Edward Via College of Medicine





# Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Arizona

## MOBILIZE AZ

[www.azblue.com](http://www.azblue.com)

The opioid epidemic has had a major impact on the overall health of Arizonans. By focusing efforts on reducing opioid misuse and substance use disorder, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona (BCBS Arizona) is tackling the opioid epidemic's devastating consequences.

As a part of BCBS Arizona's Mobilize AZ efforts, Hushabye Nursery, located in Phoenix, was awarded funding to implement innovative programming and services targeting one of Arizona's highest need groups – substance use exposed newborns and their caregivers. Hushabye Nursery offers a safe and inclusive space where mothers, family members and babies – from conception through childhood – can receive integrative care and



therapeutic support that offers each child the best possible life outcomes.

Programs include prenatal and postpartum support groups, inpatient nursery services and outpatient therapies. Hushabye Nursery's care model provides the ideal setting for the family-centered Eat, Sleep and Console (ESC) best practice care protocol for infants experiencing Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS).

### PROGRAM IMPACT:

Qualitative and quantitative assessments have demonstrated both short-term and long-term impact benefitting Tribal family members and babies.

Hushabye Nursery also partnered with all of Arizona's 638 Tribal health facilities to offer educational programs about opioid use disorder, medication assisted treatment, and NAS.



"Every baby deserves a chance for a healthy start. This progress in health equity for both current and future generations of Native Americans would not have been possible without the support of Blue Cross Blue Shield Mobilize AZ. We are so grateful!"

– Tara Sundem, co-founder and executive director, Hushabye Nursery



# Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield

## VACCINATE THE NATURAL STATE

[www.arkansasbluecross.com](http://www.arkansasbluecross.com)

Vaccinate the Natural State, the first COVID-19 vaccine promotion campaign in Arkansas, launched in early March 2021 as vaccines became widely available. The campaign targeted minority and at-risk populations where vaccine hesitancy was considered to be highest, specifically Black, Hispanic and Marshallese populations and Arkansans in rural, underserved communities.

Research revealed that vaccine-hesitant populations were more amenable to receiving vaccine information from individuals and organizations with an established and trusted community presence. Therefore, familiar faces and organizations were tapped to appeal to minority populations and those in underserved, rural communities. By forming alliances with agencies and nonprofits in local communities across the state, Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield (Arkansas BCBS)



leveraged existing community trust to advance public understanding of vaccine safety quickly.

The campaign used the “spoken word” public service announcements to emotionally connect with a younger population. Focus group findings directed specific message creation, showing target audiences how vaccines would allow them to continue enjoying the things that matter to them, i.e. church, family gatherings and sporting events.

### PROGRAM IMPACT:

**190** Vaccination events held across the state

**53%** Arkansans vaccinated as of 12/21

**20** Community supporting organizations

**75** Businesses pledged to endorse COVID-19 vaccines

**7%** Decrease in vaccine distrust

**638M** Impressions of the statewide campaign

“Working with Arkansas BCBS on the Vaccinate Arkansas effort has been rewarding and remarkably effective. This unique partnership has provided Arkansas business leaders with the support they need to navigate the COVID-19 vaccine rollout and to protect their employees and customers. Arkansas BCBS goes to outstanding lengths to serve their client companies in their effort to keep their employees healthy and able to support their families. It has been our pleasure and privilege to partner with them.”

– Randy Zook, president and CEO, Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce/AIA



# Blue Shield of California

## MATERNAL CHILD HEALTH EQUITY INITIATIVE

[www.blueshieldca.com](http://www.blueshieldca.com)

Blue Shield of California’s Maternal Child Health Equity initiative is an innovative, community health-focused offering that incorporates a high-tech, high-touch approach along with community-based organizations to help improve support, care and family-centered services for mothers, birthing people and their babies. Started in 2021, the initiative offers a comprehensive program to help address disproportionate mortality rates among mothers and children, especially in underserved communities. Services are available to expecting and new mothers in Los Angeles and Sacramento counties by signing up on the Mahmee platform, where they are connected to a care coordinator.

The goal of the initiative is to bring equitable maternity support to mothers. Blue Shield of California is working with trusted community-based organizations, including BLACK Wellness and Prosperity Center, Diversity Uplift, and Her Health First, and connecting mothers to family-centered services, emergency funds and maternal supplies. The company is also collaborating with Mahmee to bring access to health records of the mother and baby, educational materials ranging from nutrition to return to work, and unbiased guidance at every stage of the process.



### PROGRAM IMPACT:

High-tech, high-touch family-centered support for underserved birthing people in two counties in California

“Her Health First’s partnership with Blue Shield of California, to build and expand doula services for marginalized communities, has had a profound impact on the lives of pregnant people and their families. Disproportionate disparities in birth outcomes for pregnant people of color has been a stagnant trend for decades, and it is exciting to see a health care provider show leadership in prioritizing the needs of mothers and babies.”

– Shannon Shaw, executive director, Her Health First





## GROWING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

[www.floridablue.com](http://www.floridablue.com)



Research shows only 15% of Florida's ZIP codes are home to half of the state's children living in poverty. That is why as part of their Equity Alliance commitment, Florida Blue launched the Growing Resilient Communities initiative to improve prosperity and reduce generational poverty in five ZIP codes in four cities: Fort Lauderdale (33311), Jacksonville (32206), Orlando (32805) and Tampa (33612 & 33613). The initiative identifies critical ZIP codes and partners with community organizations to build cross-sector collaboration with government, nonprofits, faith institutions and local businesses. Florida Blue engaged local partners to address goals of improved health outcomes, quality education, financial security, personal safety, community success, and other needs.

### AROUND THE STATE:

- Orlando**  
 Broke ground on the Heart of West Lakes Health and Wellness Center as part of a partnership with the Lift Orlando purpose-built community initiative.
- Tampa**  
 Invested \$1.7 million in collaboration with the Tampa Innovation Partnership to provide better health, housing, employment and other opportunities in two of Tampa Bay's poorest zip codes.
- Jacksonville**  
 Helped launch the nonprofit Lift JAX to revitalize Jacksonville's historic Eastside neighborhood and eradicate generational poverty.
- Fort Lauderdale**  
 Invested nearly \$2 million to develop affordable housing options, offer free job training and educational opportunities and support residents' economic mobility.

"Poverty has always plagued the Central Florida community, but during the pandemic we saw an alarming rate of growth. There was a critical need for an organization [Florida Blue Foundation] to stand in the gap by offering essential resources that could uplift and enable members of the community to have sustainable incomes. We're honored to serve the Central Florida community and are delighted at this opportunity to expand our support through the challenge funding."

— Lynette Fields, executive director, Poverty Solutions Group, Winter Garden, FL



# Hawai'i Medical Service Association Foundation

## HMSA FOUNDATION HUI PARTNERS

[www.hmsafoundation.org](http://www.hmsafoundation.org)

The HMSA Foundation (Foundation) has embarked on a new model of philanthropy that seeks to redistribute the power balance between foundations and nonprofits, creating a more authentic, transparent and supportive relationship between “funders” and “grantees.” The Foundation believes this type of relationship leads to better outcomes for its partners and a more supportive environment from which to work.

After two months of research and vetting, the Foundation invited 10 nonprofit partners to join a hui (cohort) of organizations dedicated to the well-being and health of their communities. These 10 organizations cover five of the six inhabitable Hawaiian Islands and provide services, programs, and initiatives that cover all aspects of health, from physical to spiritual to emotional well-being. In its hui are FQHCs, behavioral health providers, a food bank, an organization dedicated to helping families secure housing, a community center, a taro farmer who provides healthy food for his community and a mentorship program for at-risk youth.



The Foundation committed to five years of funding for this hui, providing grants between \$50,000 and \$100,000 of operating funding to each organization on an annual basis. The Foundation also provides technical assistance and one dedicated staff member to oversee, coordinate, and facilitate the group. The company facilitates and hosts two gatherings per year with the entire hui at a selected partner's site for a three-day retreat that offers a chance for respite for the organizations' leaders, provides an opportunity to connect as a group, and gives the entire group the chance to strategize around systems change in Hawaii.



# Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health

## MEDICAL SCHOLARSHIPS

[www.bcidahofoundation.org](http://www.bcidahofoundation.org)

Idaho faces a severe mental health provider shortage, and that shortage is magnified in the rural parts of the state. The Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation scholarship program with Idaho State University addresses both issues. The scholarship program **awards \$1.5 million to Idaho State University** over a five-year period. There are two parts to this commitment, which is the largest ever made by the Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health:

- Scholarships are for students from Idaho who are majoring in behavioral health and want to become licensed clinical social workers.
- The second part of the program provides stipends for these students so they can obtain their required clinical hours in rural Idaho. The financial support incentivizes students to gain valuable training in parts of the state that sorely lack providers.

This is the latest scholarship program offered by the Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health. It has health care-related scholarship programs at Lewis-Clark State College and the regional medical school Idaho-WWAMI at the University of Idaho. These programs support students with health care majors looking to practice in rural parts of the state.



### PROGRAM IMPACT:

It is estimated that 50 scholarships and 50 stipends will be awarded in each of the five years of the current agreement.

The first recipients are scheduled to be named for the start of the fall semester in 2022.



**Idaho State  
University**

“Idaho ranks 49th in the country for mental health, based on high prevalence of mental illness and low rates of access to care. We are extremely thankful to the Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health for their financial support of our students.”

– Rex Force, vice president for Health Sciences and senior vice provost, Idaho State University



Foundation  
for Health, Inc.



# Regence BlueCross BlueShield

## FOUR COMMUNITIES

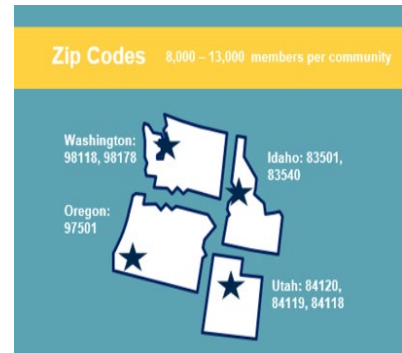
[www.regence.com](http://www.regence.com)

Regence believes that everyone should have equal opportunity to live the healthiest life possible. To this end, the company is committed to advancing equitable health outcomes for its members, their communities and its employees.

Regence health plans **announced \$1 million dollars in philanthropic community investment across underserved communities** to increase care access, as well as integrate behavioral health services into existing programs. This investment is part of the company's broader **Four Communities** project, which aims to increase access to preventative and chronic condition care by addressing members' socioeconomic challenges that prevent them from living their healthiest lives. The program was focused in targeted ZIP codes of Lewiston, Idaho; Medford, Oregon; West Valley City, Utah; and South King County, Washington.

These investments focus on:

- **Increasing care access and capacity**, as well as integrating behavioral health services into existing programs.
- **Reducing barriers to optimal health by addressing social determinants of health** including housing, food and emergency support.
- **Improving capacity for more personalized and sustainable care coordination** between medical providers and social services.



### PROGRAM IMPACT:

**5,907** Members who received outreach services

**1,378** Care gaps closed to improve health

**410** Blood pressure cuffs delivered to patients

**87%** Overall community engagement



"The investment in this work is creating a significant positive change for our community. It's as simple as that. Our staff sees people in need every day, and with this funding, we'll be able to address community needs for connection and resources like never before. We're so grateful."

– Brenda Johnson, CEO, La Clinica, Medford, Oregon



# Health Care Service Corporation

## CARE VANS

[www.hcsc.com](http://www.hcsc.com)

For more than 30 years, Health Care Service Corporation's (HCSC) Care Van mobile health program has addressed significant health care needs through preventative services for underserved populations in urban and rural areas across Illinois, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Montana and Texas.

The Care Van program helps build healthy communities by providing basic health services, educational outreach and health literacy and education. In some instances, HCSC's partners, such as the Chicago Department of Public Health, administer vaccinations and other health screenings with the support of registered nurses and other licensed professionals.

The Care Van program brings public health services such as no cost immunizations, dental sealants and health literacy directly to the communities it serves. The vans visit schools, churches, parks, shopping centers, public housing, community events and other locations. They also conduct immunization outreach clinics in communities where at-risk families live and work.

In response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, HCSC expanded its efforts to support our members and communities. Recognizing the increased need for COVID-19 vaccine distribution, the Healthy Kids, Healthy Families (HKHF)<sup>®</sup> initiative provided **more than \$1.3 million to enhance local Care Van distribution and education efforts**. In 2021, through HKHF, three vans were added to the Care Van fleet for a total of 28 vans.



### PROGRAM IMPACT:

**58,000+** Clients served

**54,000+** Immunizations

**40,000+** Additional services



"Getting people vaccinated helps reduce the disease burden, and this partnership is great because the accessibility of pharmacies helps allow people to get access to the vaccine. We really want to reach the community. Not everyone has access to health care, especially in New Mexico. We've reached a couple of people who walked in and said that they were homeless or that they just can't get into the doctor."

– Melinda Chappell, pharmacist, Walgreens



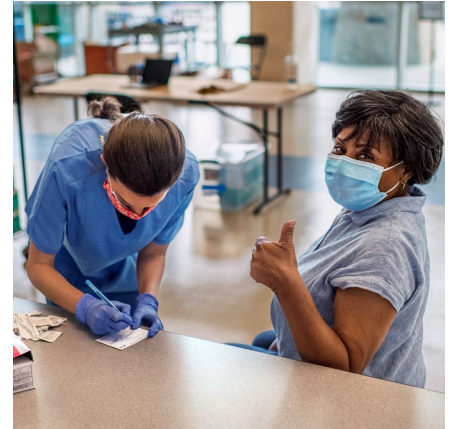
**BlueCross. BlueShield.**

Illinois • Montana • New Mexico  
Oklahoma • Texas

# Elevance Health Foundation

## VACCINATION EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

[www.elevancehealth.foundation](http://www.elevancehealth.foundation)



Acknowledging lower vaccination rates across minority populations due to a historical mistrust in the traditional medical community, Elevance Health Foundation partnered with the American Lung Association to provide science-based, factual guides nationwide to help individuals make well-informed decisions about vaccination. They worked with nationally-recognized organizations representing communities of color to develop the **Better For It series** – a suite of toolkits using culturally competent messaging and imagery for Black, Hispanic/Latino, Indigenous, and Asian audiences, that discuss the science behind and dispel myths about COVID-19 vaccinations.

In addition, the team mobilized the Vaccine Ambassador program, recruiting high-profile stakeholders within these minority communities (i.e. pastors, nonprofit leaders) to serve as advocates in disseminating the resources throughout trusted community hubs.

### PROGRAM IMPACT:

The **Better For It Series** reached **22.5 million impressions** during the COVID-19 recovery efforts.

“Support from the Elevance Health Foundation enabled us to have a very real impact on diverse communities across the country with accurate and culturally relevant information addressing vaccine hesitancy during the height of the COVID pandemic. They have joined us in rising to the challenge of reaching underserved communities with lifesaving information about the health benefits of vaccines. Outside of the pandemic, Anthem has been a long-standing and trusted partner of the Lung Association for many years on various health education initiatives, and we are grateful to their enduring support.”

– Harold Wimmer, president and CEO, American Lung Association





# The Wellmark Foundation

## SUPPORTING JOBS FOR AMERICA'S GRADUATES

[www.wellmark.com/foundation](http://www.wellmark.com/foundation)

Since its inception in 1991, The Wellmark Foundation has been addressing Social Determinants of Health by **awarding nearly \$58 million in grant and special project funding** to initiatives that positively impact the well-being of Iowans and South Dakotans.

Initiatives like Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) remove barriers and provide support services for students of great promise. A state-based national nonprofit organization, JAG has a footprint in 40 states helping students succeed in school and on-the-job. Beginning in 2021, The Wellmark Foundation began providing support for Jobs for America's Graduates South Dakota (JAG-SD) and Iowa Jobs for America's Graduates (iJAG). The funding provided by The Wellmark Foundation supports two annual development conferences in both Iowa and South Dakota.

This gives JAG students from school districts across each state a chance to connect with business and higher education leaders, demonstrate their leadership skills and compete in core competency areas.

During the Spring Career Development Conference in Iowa, The Wellmark Foundation worked with statewide health care systems and iJAG staff to create a hands-on experience and expose students to high-demand health care occupations. Representatives from The Wellmark Foundation, health care systems and health science specialty schools provided iJAG students with demonstrations and opportunities to learn more about various careers in health care. iJAG students were able to make valuable connections with local health care professionals they otherwise may not have had the chance to meet, and they were able to secure job shadow opportunities and internships during the conference.



### THE WELLMARK FOUNDATION IMPACT:

# \$58M

Funding grants and special projects in Iowa and South Dakota (1991 – present)

# 98%

Student Graduation Rate—  
Iowa Jobs for America's  
Graduates

“When an organization like The Wellmark Foundation makes a big statement in a small way, like sponsoring our conference, it means a lot. Anytime an organization can see themselves in the work we do and know that they can have impact and that they can make dreams happen, there's nothing better or bigger than that.”

– Laurie Phelan, president and CEO, iJAG



# Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas Foundation

## MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

[www.bcbsks.com](http://www.bcbsks.com)



Throughout the public health emergency, the need for mental health services rose drastically. The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas Foundation grants \$2,000 to each community mental health center in the company's service area annually. In Kansas (in the 103 counties it serves), there are 21 community mental health centers. Funds are used by the center for mental health services for uninsured clients. The centers expressed that the need for these mental health services has risen drastically since 2020 due to the pandemic and other issues.

7,000 clients were assisted overall in the state of Kansas through the community health centers.

### PROGRAM IMPACT:

# \$42,000

To help uninsured clients

# 7,000

Assisted in the state of Kansas through its community mental health centers

# Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation

## RESPONDING TO DISASTERS, INVESTING IN EQUITABLE RECOVERY

[www.bcbslafoundation.org](http://www.bcbslafoundation.org)

Since March of 2020, Louisiana has endured six federally declared natural disasters, adding tremendous hardship to the lives of people already grappling with the COVID-19 epidemic.

To meet the challenge of keeping families on their feet, the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation (Blue Cross Foundation) has made more than \$22 million in grants, including \$15 million in community crisis and disaster response funding and \$8 million in equitable improvements to the state's social determinants of health.

The Blue Cross Foundation organized ongoing collaborations between other funders, regional agencies coordinating relief, and nonprofit partners offering the front-line services that have sustained families during this prolonged period of recovery. In addition to meeting the short-term needs created by the state's challenges, the Blue Cross Foundation has invested in long-term and sustainable recovery, building on the lessons of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005.



### PROGRAM IMPACT:

**24M** Points of service to more than **2.4 Million People**

**\$15M** Allocated to tackle food insecurity, health care needs, shelter, essential services, and direct economic support for families

**51,000** Health screenings, including biometric screenings and mental health sessions

"We did not have the funds to provide clients with the rapid support in the case that a community resource was not readily available.

This support was especially crucial in rural areas. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation helped us reach people right away."

– Volunteers of America of Greater New Orleans





# CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield

## FIGHTING THE DIABETES EPIDEMIC

[www.carefirst.com](http://www.carefirst.com)

**CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield committed \$10.5 million** in a multi year, multi faceted effort to combat the diabetes epidemic in local communities. Funds were distributed across 26 local health improvement coalitions, collaboratives and community organizations.

**Phase One funding of \$1.71 million** supports organizations by prioritizing place-based approaches to health, or where community-led initiatives are uniquely suited to address the policies, systems and environmental issues that impact health and well-being within a specific neighborhood/ community. Central to this approach is the philosophy that these programs be designed, led and structured by local organizations to directly benefit the people who live there. The investments strengthen organizational capacity and partnerships with communities and health systems and support innovative interventions to address SDOH in communities.

Funding is intended to support anchor institutions and grassroots organizations to enhance upstream, community-driven interventions and preventive care techniques that include a multi sector, multi level and multi disciplinary approach through:

- Strengthening capacity funding to support and bolster organizational capacity by providing technical assistance, leadership development and resource management.
- Strengthening partnerships to encourage collaboration between health care systems, grassroots organizations and their initiatives while increasing meaningful community engagement and impact.
- Supporting Innovative Interventions investments for the design and creation of prevention and management strategies that address the root causes of diabetes, from educational programs, such as increased access to good nutrition and mobilization of community health workers to monitor and scale these strategies.



Additional grants include the Farm to Library Project in Worcester County on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, which will be used in the creation of three community gardens serving more than 294 families and providing scholarship opportunities for job-skills training for residents in the county.

### PROGRAM IMPACT:

# \$10.5M

Total investment

# 26

 Local community health improvement coalitions, councils & collaboratives

“With CareFirst funding, the United Way of the National Capital Area, will expand a current health initiative, Choose Healthy Life. In the District of Columbia, Black or African American residents have higher rates of diabetes (17.7%) than the overall District rate of 8.7%, and more than 26% of the populations in this region live below the poverty line.”

– Rosie Allen-Herring, president and CEO, United Way of the National Capital Area



# Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation

## SPECIAL INITIATIVES GRANTS

[www.bluecrossmafoundation.org](http://www.bluecrossmafoundation.org)

Through the Special Initiatives (SI) grant program, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation (Foundation) seeks to positively impact health or health care access for Massachusetts residents who have been economically, racially, culturally or socially marginalized.

As a responsive grantmaking program, SI grants allow communities and organizations that serve them to design and lead culturally relevant pilot programs that are aligned with at least one of the Foundation's strategic priorities: to promote access to quality care and coverage, access to behavioral health services, and the elimination of structural racism and racial inequities in health.

In 2021, the Foundation awarded the Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center (BCNC) a grant to expand its capacity to meet the behavioral health needs of its community through a multi tiered approach designed to:

- 1) Increase community service providers' capacity to provide behavioral health services to youth, adults and families in Chinatown
- 2) Increase Chinese immigrant youth, adults and families' access to culturally and linguistically appropriate mental health services

The initiative supported two BCNC staff to become certified as Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) trainers and then deliver MHFA trainings to other staff as well as youth, adults and caregivers. Toward the second goal, BCNC is providing individual counseling with a priority for individuals suffering from depression, anxiety, domestic violence, tobacco use disorder or other behavioral health needs. The services are provided by clinically trained staff who are fluent in Mandarin, Cantonese and English.



### PROGRAM IMPACT:

Overall, a total of **696 participants** received services through BCNC's Family Services program.

### THROUGH THE GRANT:

<b>12 parents</b> received group Therapeutic Interventions	<b>23 participants</b> received individual counseling
<b>35 staff &amp; interns</b> received MHFA training	<b>51 individuals</b> attended mental health workshops

"Culturally appropriate mental health services are not only about the ability to communicate with the client in the language the client feels most comfortable, it's also about having an understanding of the client's lived experience and different ways their culture influences their awareness of the need and receptiveness and challenges to seeking services. The grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation is helping us address inequities in access to care by expanding our capacity to deliver mental health prevention and services within an organization that the Asian community already trusts."

– Grace Shixin Su, director of Family Services, Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center



# Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan

## ADDRESSING FOOD AND NUTRITION INSECURITY

[www.bcbsm.com](http://www.bcbsm.com)



According to a 2021 Feeding America report, 13% of Michigan’s population is food insecure including more than 550,000 children. To help address this issue, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and its Foundation partnered with the Michigan Health Endowment Fund and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to **support \$650,000 in grant funding to 14 community-based organizations** for evidence-based, sustainable initiatives that address food and nutrition insecurity to improve health equity through Michigan’s local food systems. The collaboration invited proposals from Michigan-based local food policy councils and nonprofit organizations seeking funding for strategies tailored to the local needs and culture within their communities.

The Addressing Food and Nutrition Insecurity to Improve Health Equity initiative serves Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed (ALICE) individuals and families, seniors, mothers and children, and Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities. Innovative initiatives tailored to the community that included collaboration among multiple stakeholders, addressed health equity and with strong sustainability plans were prioritized.

The work these grant recipients will do over the next year will strengthen local food systems, improve health outcomes, and reduce risk to chronic diseases, and empower individuals and families to achieve greater economic stability.

“This funding will provide 30,000 nutritious meals to those with a special or unique need whether that’s a chronic illness, a disability or transportation issue that often prevents them from coming to get food in some of the more traditional ways. The underserved in our community, those who face systemic barriers to access, will benefit the most because of this generosity of this grant.”

– Michelle Lantz, Greater Lansing Food Bank



# Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota

## RACIAL AND HEALTH EQUITY

[www.bluecrossmn.com](http://www.bluecrossmn.com)

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota (BCBSMN) has long been committed to transforming care and improving health for all communities across Minnesota. The company focuses on racial and health equity through its advocacy efforts for more equitable policies and systems and investments supporting communities experiencing the greatest inequities—ultimately striving to eliminate health inequities and dismantle structural racism. Some of the highlights from the past 12 months include:

- Committing \$5 million to the University of Minnesota to establish the Center for Antiracism Research for Health Equity, which develops evidence-based research to understand and measure the impact of racism on health
- Launching a campaign encouraging businesses and individuals to commit to dismantling structural racism by educating themselves on the issue through the use of anti racism toolkits and videos developed by BCBSMN
- Teaming up with the Minnesota Department of Health, the Metropolitan Council and Metro Transit to transform a fleet of buses into mobile vaccination clinics to ensure equitable COVID-19 vaccine distribution throughout all Minnesota communities
- Continuing its partnership with ThreeSixty Journalism to change the mainstream narrative on health and shape the next generation of BIPOC journalists
- Partnering with the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA) to launch a multi generational project addressing racism through conversation and the power of art
- Collaborating with TurnSignI, an innovative app that provides on-demand live access to an attorney specifically trained to de-escalate interaction between law enforcement, drivers and passengers
- Committing \$500,000 for 24 Minnesota State University Presidential Scholarships over seven years to help build more career pathways for BIPOC health care practitioners, culturally competent care providers, and future changemakers



### HIGHLIGHTS:

## \$6 MILLION

To support health equity, access to healthy foods, physical activity and commercial tobacco control through the Center for Prevention

## \$5 MILLION

In grants, through the BCBS Minnesota Foundation to support early childhood programs, safe and welcoming communities, access to coverage and COVID-19 related relief efforts

## \$5 MILLION

To establish the Center for Antiracism Research for Health Equity

“As an organization, we’re deeply committed to listening, learning and working together to create a healthier future for all Minnesotans. If the pandemic has taught us anything, it’s those systemic problems can’t be solved in isolation – and they can’t be the responsibility of any one group or organization. The journey to health equity takes all of us.”

– Dana Erickson, president and CEO, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota





# Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation

## SCHOOL GARDEN PROGRAM

[www.healthiermississippi.org](http://www.healthiermississippi.org)

Since its inception in 2004, the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation (Foundation) has formed relationships with community and school leaders and other stakeholders to build a healthy Mississippi. The Foundation's targeted grant funding is provided for the following purposes: increasing health literacy, enhancing or starting farmers' markets, cultivating community and school gardens, encouraging tobacco-free environments, creating outdoor play spaces, and constructing places for physical fitness, healthy cooking classes, and health education, among other innovative project developments.

The Foundation has partnered with K-12 schools across the state to provide school gardens for healthy hands-on learning experiences. The school garden program uses the schoolyard as a classroom fully integrated into the fabric of participating schools and the academic experience of every student.

In a school garden, students become farmers, scientists, mathematicians, historians, poets, chefs and horticulturists making the full learning experience more relevant and engaging.

At one of its most innovative models, the school garden at Mannsdale Upper Elementary School in Madison County boasts a greenhouse, 39 raised garden beds, five hydroponic tower gardens and a compost bin.



### PROGRAM IMPACT:

**70** School gardens funded as of 2021

**38** Mississippi counties impacted

"We are excited to transform the Mannsdale Upper Elementary School garden and greenhouse into a year-round learning lab to encourage students to choose healthy nutritious foods. Our goal is to support health and well-being and serve as an educational hub to teach parents, students and community members the basic principles of gardening."

— Rolando Roman, physical education teacher, Mannsdale Upper Elementary School

# Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City

## MID-AMERICA REGIONAL COUNCIL PARTNERSHIP

[www.blueKC.com](http://www.blueKC.com)



African Americans are more than twice as likely as whites to die of preventable heart disease and stroke. African American women are two to three times more likely to die from maternal health complications and have birth-related complications than non-Hispanic, White mothers. The goal of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City's (Blue KC) Community Health team is to identify and reduce health disparities, driven by racial and/or ethnic and socioeconomic factors that are barriers to achieving optimal health.

Beginning in April 2021, the Community Health team partnered with the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC), a nonprofit association with a coordinated network of community services, to meet the socioeconomic needs of its members identified by Spira Care and Care Management providers.

A total of 269 Blue KC members were referred, and 146 served through this partnership, receiving an in-depth social determinants of health (SDOH) assessment for those factors negatively affecting their health, including socioeconomic status, food, housing, education, neighborhood and physical environment, employment, and social support networks, as well as access to health care.

### PROGRAM IMPACT:

Of the members assessed, **70% received 30 days of continued support** and another 8% received an additional 30-60 day extension to help them address those barriers to health.



# Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska

## MOBILE SCREENING UNIT

[www.NebraskaBlue.com](http://www.NebraskaBlue.com)



Supporting local communities is an important component of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska's (BCBSNE) mission and values. BCBSNE sponsorships support innovative programs across Nebraska impacting education, human services, health and wellness.

BCBSNE provides annual support to the Nebraska Lions Foundation Mobile Screening Unit, which travels the state to provide free vision and hearing screenings at schools, offices and public events for all Nebraskans. Approximately 10% of students screened in 2021 were referred to their physician for follow-up vision and hearing appointments.

### PROGRAM IMPACT:

**1,000**

Volunteers

**221**

Schools

**34,176**

Children screened

**3,000**

Children referred to their physician for follow-up vision or hearing appointments



"Too few children receive the vision and hearing screening services they need which means they may go through childhood with untreated hearing and visual impairments. Through our program, and with the support of BCBSNE, we are able to help uncover and remedy health issues, improving the lives of thousands of children across the state."

– Allen Darrell, manager-operator, Nebraska Lions Foundation's Mobile Screening Unit





# Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey

## NEIGHBORS IN HEALTH

[www.horizonblue.com](http://www.horizonblue.com)



In the spring of 2020, Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey launched Horizon Neighbors in Health to address social determinants of health. Horizon Neighbors in Health provides virtual, telephonic and direct, face-to-face interaction between Horizon members living in under-resourced communities and community health workers who orchestrate the services they need. By building trusting relationships, the program guides members to resources and empowers them with options and information they can use to take greater control of their health.

While participants are generally sicker than the overall member population, an independent study found those participants to be significantly more likely to follow-up with a primary care provider after discharge from the emergency department or an inpatient admission, which may help prevent future rehospitalizations.

### PROJECT IMPACT:

**4,500+**

Horizon members newly enrolled with over 3,000 graduating

**9,000+**

Members assisted since 2020

**60** Community health workers hired, trained and certified to support members

“Horizon BCBS’s Neighbors in Health is vital in finding and assisting people who might not otherwise be looking for, or willing to accept, help. We have been able to feed countless families, pay for prescriptions, even help get someone a laptop so they can enroll in classes to start school. It demonstrates that we care about our members.”

– Cheryl Towns BSN, RN, nurse care manager, Trenton Health Team, Care Management Team





# Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield

## IMPROVING HEALTH WITH ACCESS TO FOOD

[www.highmark.com](http://www.highmark.com)

Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield (Highmark) collaborates with and supports the Center for Inclusion Health—Allegheny Health Network’s (AHN) Healthy Food Centers to bridge the meal gap in a ‘food as medicine’ approach. The Center for Inclusion Health focuses on socially marginalized and vulnerable populations in times of acute and on going need in its communities. The Healthy Food Centers exist at five AHN hospital sites.

The Healthy Food Center has positively impacted Highmark’s target population by increasing food security, access to nutritious food sources, and improving health outcomes, such as, blood sugar management, better awareness of health status, and developing a relationship between staff and patients. One of the most important outcomes Highmark has seen is that by providing healthy foods, education and support, the company enables and empowers the patient to live a healthy lifestyle.

Patient survey results showed that after six months of participation, fewer people were struggling accessing healthy foods, more people felt comfortable preparing fruits and vegetables, and more people understood how what they eat related to their health.



### PROGRAM IMPACT:

**5** Healthy Food Center sites\*

**16,000**  
People served\*

**160,000**  
Meals served\*

\*Since March 2018

“The Healthy Food Centers are a wonderful example of how, by working together, we can ensure a brighter future for our neighbors who are food insecure. This partnership with the AHN’s Healthy Food Centers is critically important in making sure people have access to nutritious food when they need it and where it’s convenient for them to get it.”

— Lisa Scales, president and CEO, Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank



# Excellus BlueCross BlueShield

## FOODLINK PARTNERSHIP

[www.excellusbcbs.com](http://www.excellusbcbs.com)

Excellus BlueCross BlueShield (Excellus BCBS) partnered with Foodlink over the past five years to **invest more than \$285,000 in various initiatives** including:

- Construction of an Urban Farm Playground
- Cooking Together Program
- Food Banks

Excellus BCBS has evolved its relationship from sponsorships and employee volunteering to pilot programs and employee board membership. Excellus BCBS' mission to help people in its communities live healthier and more secure lives aligns with Foodlink's mission to leverage the power of food to end hunger and build healthier communities. Excellus BCBS identified high-risk, high-need Medicaid and SafetyNet members and provided them access to fresh fruits and vegetables via a Mobile Curbside Market for six months. The program also offered cooking education classes and focused on both urban and rural members.

In 2022, Excellus BCBS' partnership will focus on maternal health with a sponsorship for a new Mobile WIC Unit and identifying pregnant members who would benefit from a food delivery program for one year.



"It's incredibly reassuring and valuable to have the support of Excellus BlueCross BlueShield for this innovative expansion of Foodlink's Curbside Market. Food insecurity and poor diet put a burden on our health care system. With our Fresh Account partnership, we are improving health outcomes, lowering health care costs and creating an improved clinical and patient experience for all of our enrolled participants."

– Camille Verbofsky, director of community health programs, Foodlink



# Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina

## LA MESITA

[www.bluecrossnc.com](http://www.bluecrossnc.com)

North Carolina’s underserved and rural communities face significant inequity in access to behavioral health care. To help address this challenge, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (Blue Cross NC) partnered with El Futuro to expand the nonprofit’s La Mesita Latino Mental Health Provider Network program. The La Mesita program aims to increase the quality and reach of culturally responsive mental health care services for Latino families across North Carolina.

**Blue Cross NC’s \$250,000 multi-year commitment** helped fund the pilot program’s efforts to offer low-cost and often free training and professional development programming to its vast network of behavioral health care providers, reduce disparities in rural health care through improved engagement with rural providers, and progress toward development of a model Latino mental health care program in the value-based environment. This strategic partnership supports Blue Cross NC’s diversity, equity, and inclusion goal to improve access to behavioral health care in rural and underserved communities in North Carolina by 25% in five years.

Since the collaboration began in 2019, the La Mesita program has expanded its member network to over 1,000 behavioral health providers and allied professionals. And in year two alone, the program trained over 580 providers through its webinar series featuring



nationally renowned experts in the Latino mental health field. Through monthly webinars, provider learning cohorts, and evidence-based programming and case consultations, El Futuro and the La Mesita program have become more established within the North Carolina provider community as a resource for accessing the latest research and an access point for specialized training opportunities, as well as a hub for mental health providers serving Latino families to come together and support one another.

Blue Cross NC’s intentional investment helps El Futuro expand its programming and infrastructure to better serve this population.

“With Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina’s support, El Futuro’s La Mesita Network of Latinx Mental Health Professionals has grown to more than 1,200 members from around the state and beyond. Through this work, we are providing critical training, capacity-building and professional development that supports the workforce growth of bilingual and culturally responsive behavioral health providers at a moment of unprecedented demand. Growing this network of providers makes high quality mental health care services more accessible for Latino immigrant communities across the state.”

– Kerry Brock, MPA, director of advancement and strategy, El Futuro





# Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Dakota Caring Foundation

## CARINGFORCOMMUNITIES GRANTS

[www.bcbsnd.com/caring-foundation](http://www.bcbsnd.com/caring-foundation)

The Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota Caring Foundation partnered with the North Dakota Rural Electric Cooperative Foundation to bring accessible and healthy food options to Walsh County (northeast North Dakota). Through this partnership, the Rural Access Distribution Cooperative installed climate-controlled grocery locker systems in Fordville and Adams; two rural communities that do not have grocery stores. Now—community members can buy local products through a secure, online purchasing platform and have groceries delivered right to their rural town.

The goal is to increase access to locally-retailed and produced products with an emphasis on healthy foods in rural places.

Additionally, this program will bolster the sustainability of the rural grocery stores operating in that region, improve affordability, variety and convenience for the 10,750 residents. Currently, these community members drive 15-20 miles in order to purchase groceries. With the new system, residents can now conveniently place an online order and items are then delivered to the lockers in their town. Rural communities are struggling to compete with big box stores, Amazon and other franchises. This project demonstrates that rural places have power to collectively build volume and control over distribution of healthy and perishable food.





# Capital Blue Cross

## VACCINATIONS

[www.capbluecross.com](http://www.capbluecross.com)



In early 2021, **Capital Blue Cross** coordinated with Rite Aid and its local pharmacists to provide free COVID-19 vaccinations through community-based clinics, a model that followed the then-newly announced federal strategy for vaccine distribution. The clinics provided first and second doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to nearly 10,000 Pennsylvanians across Central Pennsylvania and the Lehigh Valley.

The goal was to hold the clinics in underserved neighborhoods and vaccinate the most at-risk community members, regardless of whether they had health insurance or were Capital Blue Cross members. Capital worked with several community health center partners, who were eager

to participate in the vaccination effort. The health centers reached out to their patients to encourage them to stop by the clinics to receive their free vaccinations. Holding the clinics at neighborhood health centers helped community members feel more at ease about receiving a vaccine in a familiar setting. Dozens of employee volunteers from Capital Blue Cross, as well as community volunteers and health center workers, assisted with the clinics.

Vaccination recipients were grateful for the opportunity to get vaccinated without having to leave their neighborhoods, and some acknowledged they likely would not have gotten vaccinated if not for the Capital Blue Cross clinics.

“We are pleased to continue working with Capital Blue Cross on community vaccination clinics that help expand access to the COVID-19 vaccine here in our home commonwealth of Pennsylvania. These partnerships help us reach eligible COVID-19 vaccine recipients where they live, work and worship, and where they are most comfortable getting vaccinated – right in their own neighborhood. We look forward to continuing this work to help end the pandemic and get Pennsylvania thriving.”

– Jocelyn Konrad, executive vice president and chief pharmacy officer, Rite Aid



# Independence Blue Cross Foundation

## PEDIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE WITH CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF PHILADELPHIA & GIRARD COLLEGE

[www.ibxfoundation.org](http://www.ibxfoundation.org)



The Independence Blue Cross Foundation is leading a comprehensive, integrated tele-behavioral health care model with enhanced socioemotional support for students. The pilot targets children and teens at Girard College, an independent, five-day boarding school in Philadelphia for approximately 300 academically focused students in grades 1-12.

The students come from families with limited financial resources, headed by a single parent or guardian. All Girard students receive need-based full scholarships; African Americans make up 80% of the student body. Eighty percent of students self-reported experiencing a traumatic event on a student experience intake form in 2020.

This collaborative effort addresses untreated behavioral health needs that stem from trauma, brings services directly to students, and increases resources for parents to reduce the likelihood and severity of mental health disorders long term. The program also seeks to remove the stigma around mental health. Clinical services are provided in the school setting by a Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) health professional.

In addition, training is also provided to teachers, administrators, and school counselors to ensure all students with undiagnosed mental health conditions are being supported.

### PROGRAM IMPACT

In the first six months of the pilot:

- 241** Behavioral or crisis referrals to CHOP's Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences for treatment for trauma symptoms, anxiety/depression, ADHD and comorbidities
- 22** Interventions in which students are now receiving counseling
- 17** Students facing behavioral health crisis and referred to the appropriate level of care

"The impact of mental health on student achievement is a global issue that needs to be addressed. We know that approximately 80% of Girard students have had some type of traumatic childhood experience, such as depression, family or community violence, substance abuse, family incarceration, homelessness, or food insecurity. Our goal in partnering with Children's Hospital and Independence Blue Cross is to provide the necessary intervention and support for our students and equip them with the skills needed to negotiate and overcome obstacles to learning and growth."

– Heather Wathington, Ph.D., former president, Girard College

INDEPENDENCE BLUE CROSS  
FOUNDATION



# Triple-S Salud

## ADDRESSING SOCIAL ISOLATION

[salud.grupotriples.com](http://salud.grupotriples.com)



Triple-S is generating awareness in Puerto Rico about the impact of social isolation and loneliness on people's health – an issue that affects all ages in its communities.

The initiative launched with a symposium led by keynote speaker Dr. Juliette Holt-Lunstad, a renowned researcher on the subject and founding chair of Scientific Advisory Council of the Coalition to End Social Isolation. Right after the symposium, Triple-S launched a public awareness campaign on multimedia that ran from April to August and has reached 2 million people.

Triple-S continues to work with other sectors to promote research on the subject, public policy, and pilot projects. As part of these efforts, the Puerto Rico Governor's Office is working on an executive order that will focus on understanding the scope of the problem in Puerto Rico and promote programs that can address its effects on health and community well-being.

Another part of the initiative is working to increase community investment from companies and foundations to create interventions that promote social connectedness.

### HEALTH RISKS LINKED TO SOCIAL ISOLATION:

- Social isolation represents a risk to life expectancy as high as smoking 15 cigarettes a day and is linked to **29% increase all cause risk for mortality and 25% increased risk for cancer mortality**
- Weak social links **increases the risk of cardiovascular disease by 32%**
- Loneliness among heart failure patients has been associated with a **nearly four times increased risk of death, 68% increased risk of hospitalization**



# Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island

## RI LIFE INDEX

[www.bcbsri.com](http://www.bcbsri.com)

Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island (BCBSRI) understands that achieving comprehensive health and well-being for all Rhode Islanders is rooted in understanding how social determinants of health affect its community. The RI Life Index, commissioned by BCBSRI and developed in partnership with the Brown University School of Public Health, is an annual statewide survey that captures Rhode Islanders' perceptions of social determinants of health in their communities and identifies areas of opportunity for improvement.

In its third year, the 2021 RI Life Index was conducted in 14 languages and surveyed 2,500 Rhode Islanders. Respondents were asked questions about housing availability and affordability; programs and services for children and older adults; food security, economic situation, managing health problems; confidence using technology, and other factors that may impact their ability to lead healthy lives. Data gleaned from this survey allows the research team to examine barriers and trends related to social determinants of health.

The RI Life Index serves as an evolving guide for BCBSRI to address the holistic well-being of Rhode Island residents. The ongoing initiative allows BCBSRI to focus on the areas that Rhode Islanders deem most integral to improved health and well-being and measures the progress of BCBSRI's efforts in this arena. As the program continues, BCBSRI will adapt, listen, learn and act to improve Rhode Islanders' well-being by addressing social factors that influence outcomes across the state.



"This survey tells us a lot about the barriers the people of Rhode Island face every day to achieving health, especially people of color and people living in lower socioeconomic communities. Directly connecting with Rhode Islanders and listening to them closely through the RI Life Index, lets us ensure that efforts to address public health take everyone into account and can have impact on the most vulnerable people in our communities."

– Dr. Ashish Jha, dean of the Brown University School of Public Health  
(currently on leave, serving as White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator)





# BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina Foundation

## ROADMAP TO FOOD SECURITY

[www.bcbsscfoundation.org](http://www.bcbsscfoundation.org)



One of the major goals of the South Carolina Roadmap to Food Security Community-Based Learning Collaborative is to reduce food insecurity, including racial disparities in **food insecurity, statewide by 30% over the next five years.**

Supported by the BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina Foundation, the learning collaborative aimed to engage local and statewide partners to help achieve the stated goal in ways that build upon, align, and accelerate current efforts to improve food security at three levels—individual/household, community, and statewide.

By the end of the learning collaborative, cross-sector teams worked together to:

- Improve community-level access to healthy, affordable food by advancing initiatives that strengthen food systems in municipalities
- Improve outcomes for defined food-insecure client populations in specific communities by optimizing and aligning health and social services
- Inform and improve statewide food systems by supporting policies that remove barriers surrounding racial equity as well as access to and affordability of healthy food
- Identify policy and system barriers that can inform efforts by stakeholders to improve social and structural determinants of health

## PROGRAM IMPACT

### Greenville:

- Established a Food Equity Action Board
- Received funding to hire a pediatric food navigator housed at Prisma Health
- Received funding through No Kid Hungry to provide food for backpack programs

### Kershaw:

- Launching [WherelsCareKC.com](http://WherelsCareKC.com) - Resource Inventory, making resources match the need
- Lowered the A1C levels of Hispanic patients with diabetes through the piloting of the VeggieRx program

### Charleston/Tricounty:

- Integrating SDOH screening through electronic health records into the clinical workflow – providers ask a minimum set of questions to identify patient needs
- Establishing a Foodshare Hub in Berkeley County
- Established a Food Policy Council within the city of Charleston

### Spartanburg:

- Implemented an SDOH questionnaire for Spartanburg Housing residents
- Deployed YMCA bus transportation system to increase farmer's market access and the delivery of FoodShare boxes

"When the team reached out to the YMCA, they jumped on it." Duncan says. "The Learning Collaborative," she says, "sped up the process." Within a month, the YMCA was distributing fresh produce through FoodShare.

– Alissa Duncan, coalition and food system manager, PAL Spartanburg



# BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee Foundation

## FUNDING HEALTH EQUITY RESEARCH

[www.bcbst.com](http://www.bcbst.com)

The BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee Foundation has awarded **\$325,000 to Meharry Medical College’s Center for the Study of Social Determinants of Health**. The grant will fund research by the nation’s largest private, historically Black academic health sciences center on barriers to health care, poor health outcomes and vaccine hesitancy in at-risk, largely minority communities.

Over the coming months, Meharry researchers will work with BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee’s clinical and data teams to use the company’s Social Vulnerability Index, a tool created to identify factors that increase risk for negative health outcomes, in developing strategies to improve health equity and COVID-19 vaccine acceptance.

Studies show that several factors impact an individual’s risk of developing severe COVID-19, including race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and lack of access to needed health providers/services such as primary care and behavioral health care. Meharry’s research will identify areas of Tennessee with a high density of at-risk individuals and guide strategies for interacting with communities to drive positive behavioral change and improve population health.



“We appreciate the BlueCross Foundation’s support of this research, which is guided by the feedback and input shared by our communities. We look forward to finding effective ways to combine precision medicine and public health approaches that can optimize health equity for Tennesseans.”

– Dr. Bryan Heckman, director, Meharry Medical College’s Center for the Study of Social Determinants of Health



# Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont

## ENSURING EQUITY FOR TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

[www.bluecrossvt.org](http://www.bluecrossvt.org)



### Praise for BCBSVT's ongoing work in gender affirming care:

"This is wonderful – thanks so much for the continued good work Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont is doing to make your values, and actions, known. Grateful."

– Dana Kaplan,  
executive director, Outright

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont (BCBSVT) is working to ensure equity in Vermont's transgender population by providing access to health care that supports the overall well-being of individuals seeking gender affirmation. BCBSVT do this by helping each of these members navigate and coordinate care and services in a complex health care system that, historically, were inaccessible, which mitigated serious mental health concerns.

This is a decade-long journey to realize BCBSVT's vision of transforming health care and improving the overall health outcomes of transgender members. The company looks at health care in a holistic way to identify what is important to members seeking gender affirming care and how it can support them. BCBSVT works with specialty providers in this space to refine its policy and to connect with patients wherever they live geographically.



# Premera Blue Cross

## SOCIAL IMPACT GRANTS

[www.premera.com](http://www.premera.com)



Premera Blue Cross, through its Social Impact program, has **awarded \$2.2 million in grants to 22 organizations in Washington and Alaska**. Grantees' work ranges from trauma care for students in the Black community, to housing and behavioral health support for families experiencing homelessness, to transitional housing for teens.

**The Carl Maxey Center:** \$50,000 to support programs and services focused on addressing the needs of Spokane's Black community, which is impacted by racial disparities in almost all social determinants, including a life expectancy which is among the lowest in Spokane county.

**AK Youth Force:** \$25,000 to help fund a mental health support program for youth ages 12-19. Through workshops and partnerships with local organizations, they help youths build long-lasting relationship skills

while supporting their positive socioemotional development and healthy transitions into adulthood.

**HopeSparks:** \$75,000 for its *Building Futures* campaign, which will help the organization meet the increasing need for infant and early childhood mental health and early intervention services. HopeSparks is a recognized leader in behavioral health, early intervention, family support services, kinship care, home visitation and the integration of mental and physical health for children and families.

**Together Center:** \$350,000 to develop affordable housing and a full suite of wrap-around services together in one transit-adjacent location, aiming to keep people housed and cohesively address health inequities for East King County's ethnically and socioeconomically diverse population.

**Vine Maple Place:** \$300,000 to fund evidence-based behavioral health programs for families in deep crisis and increase capacity to reach 53% more moms and kids in the next two years.

**Volunteers of America of Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho:** \$350,000 to increase the capacity of its Crosswalk teen shelter and Supportive Independent Living Program (SILP), which addresses gaps in programs for 16 and 17 year olds who can't go home because of safety reasons and for whom foster care is not an option.

"When a community is in survival mode, as the Black community currently is, it can only focus on the symptoms of racism. An empowered and well-equipped community, however, is better able to focus its attention and efforts on racism's root causes and on identifying and developing the strategies that are necessary to dismantle systemic barriers. All of the Carl Maxey Center's efforts are focused on building power within Spokane's Black community."

– Sandy Williams, executive director, Carl Maxey Center

**PREMERA** | 

**BLUE CROSS**



# Blue Cross Blue Shield of Wyoming Caring Foundation

## HEALTH PROFESSIONS SCHOLARSHIPS

[www.bcbswy.com](http://www.bcbswy.com)

The Blue Cross Blue Shield of Wyoming Caring Foundation has been supporting students for nearly 30 years through its Health Professions scholarships. The program provides a \$1,000 scholarship annually to a student seeking a degree in a health profession at each Wyoming community college and the University of Wyoming (UW).

With the nationwide shortage of nurses, and through conversations with its hospital partners, the Caring Foundation recognized that Wyoming hospitals have a unique need when it comes to recruiting and hiring nurses, particularly in rural settings. Therefore, the Foundation saw nursing education as an area where it can help strengthen Wyoming's rural hospital system. This expansion included two scholarship programs offered through UW:

- **ReNew Scholarship:** Allows students to enroll in BSN coursework through UW simultaneously with their Associate Degree in Nursing. This program allows students to reside in their local community, while working toward a nursing degree. The Caring Foundation is proud to fund seven \$1,000 scholarships annually.
- **Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP):** This advanced nursing degree offers two tracts: family nurse practitioner (FNP) and psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner (PMHNP). Both clinical concentrations prepare students for careers in rural health care. The Caring Foundation is proud to fund five \$10,000 scholarships annually, with at least two required to be awarded to a student with a PMHNP focus.



In 2020, the Caring Foundation expanded its scholarship opportunities to include an Inclusive Scholarship for an Indian American student at Central Wyoming Community College. This \$5,000 annual scholarship is a full-tuition scholarship for a student working toward a degree with a focus on a health profession.

### PROGRAM IMPACT:

**150** Scholarships awarded since 2016

**20** Scholarships awarded annually

"Pursuing my Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) was the natural progression for me to increase my autonomy and continue caring for my patients. After graduation, my new role as a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner, allows me the opportunity to fight the mental health crisis within our state. Unfortunately, Wyoming struggles from a lack of resources and providers to adequately provide our citizens the care they desperately need. I look forward to this challenge and hope to make a lasting impact on health care in Wyoming."

– Connor Rezzonico





225 North Michigan Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60601

[www.bcbs.com/investingincommunities](http://www.bcbs.com/investingincommunities)

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