Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Partners With Community Servings to Help Seniors With Congestive Heart Failure

Program will provide heart-healthy meals to seniors recovering after hospital stays

BOSTON, Feb. 20, 2019 /PRNewswire/ -- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts has launched an innovative partnership with Boston-based nonprofit Community Servings to provide medically tailored meals to its Medicare Advantage members who need post-acute care for congestive heart failure. Blue Cross is one of the first health plans in Massachusetts to offer this type of program, which will provide dietitian-directed meals that are customized for members with congestive heart failure who have been recently discharged from the hospital.

"We understand that when seniors with congestive heart failure are recovering after a hospital stay, what they eat is just as important as the medications they take," said Blue Cross Executive Vice President of Medicare Stephanie Lovell. "We know that many seniors with this condition are at higher risk to end up back in the hospital. Our goal is to keep them out of the hospital and the emergency department, and one of the ways we can do that is by improving their nutrition—delivering locally produced, high-quality, heart-healthy meals."

Community Servings currently serves more than 2,300 critically ill individuals and their families in more than 20 cities and towns in Massachusetts.

"We're thrilled to partner with an innovative health plan like Blue Cross—they truly understand the power of food and nutrition to improve people's health," said Community Servings CEO David Waters. "Often, people who are just getting out of the hospital and are managing a chronic illness like congestive heart failure feel overwhelmed and may have other barriers to obtaining medically appropriate foods. Our program seeks to ease their transition back to home and good health."

Each week, Community Servings will deliver to program participants 10 made-from-scratch meals plus snacks and milk if appropriate for their condition. A registered dietitian will review the meal selections to ensure they are heart-healthy entrees that are low in both sodium and fat. Participants also will receive nutrition education from a registered dietitian. At the start of the program, Blue Cross will notify each participant's primary care provider that their patient is enrolled. Blue Cross nurse case managers also will periodically check in with participants to monitor the impact of the program.

The service, which will be offered at no cost to participants, will begin in 21 communities across Massachusetts including Boston and Worcester. Approximately 200 Blue Cross members will be eligible to participate in the first year.

Blue Cross has partnered with Community Servings for many years through its corporate citizenship efforts. "We've been fortunate to collaborate with Community Servings as part of our work in the community, and we've seen firsthand the impact that this organization has on improving the health of thousands of people in the commonwealth," Lovell said. "That's why we're excited to partner with them on this new initiative."

In the future, Blue Cross will evaluate whether the program should be expanded to members with other chronic conditions who may benefit from medically tailored meals.

This new program is part of Blue Cross' commitment to help Medicare Advantage members manage their chronic conditions. Last year, the health plan introduced a remote monitoring program to improve the health of members with congestive heart failure, and in 2017, it began offering in-home doctor's visits to seniors with five or more chronic conditions.

"We are committed to coming up with new and different ways to help our seniors manage their chronic conditions and take good care of their health," said Lovell. "We want to help them develop healthy habits to manage their condition in the long term. We think this program will have a positive impact on our members' health and quality of life."

About Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (bluecrossma.com) is a community-focused, tax-paying, not-for-profit health plan headquartered in Boston. We're the trusted health plan for more than 25,000 Massachusetts employers and are committed to working with others in a spirit of shared responsibility to make quality health care affordable. Consistent with our corporate promise to always put our 2.8 million members first, we're rated among the nation's best health plans for member satisfaction and quality. Connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn.

About Community Servings
Community Servings is a not-for-profit organization with a 29-year history of providing medically tailored meals and nutrition services to individuals and families coping with critical and chronic illnesses like HIV/AIDS, cancer, kidney disease, diabetes, heart disease, and others. Community Servings broke ground last year on a new "Food Campus" at its Jamaica Plain headquarters, a project supported by its $10 million Food is the Foundation capital campaign. For more information, visit www.servings.org.

SOURCE Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts

For further information: Amy McHugh, amy.mchugh@bcbsma.com, 617-246-2311