Blue Cross Blue Shield Of Massachusetts Adds Acupuncture Coverage

State's largest health plan adds benefit to increase options for non-opioid pain relief

BOSTON, Oct. 3, 2019 /PRNewswire/ -- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts ("Blue Cross") today announced that it will offer a new acupuncture benefit starting January 1, 2020. Blue Cross members - except for Medicare Advantage - will have coverage for acupuncture services when their coverage begins or renews in the new year. Eligible members will have coverage for up to 12 acupuncture visits per calendar year when performed by a network provider, such as a Licensed Acupuncturist, Doctor of Medicine, or Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine. The cost share for members will be the same as an outpatient office visit with a specialist and referrals are not required.

"We want our members to have access to a broad range of safe, effective treatments for pain management," said Andrew Dreyfus, president and CEO of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts. "We know our members and employer customers are increasingly seeking alternative treatments like acupuncture, both for chronic conditions and overall wellness."

Eligible members can receive acupuncture services for any reason – they do not need to be diagnosed with a medical condition to be eligible for coverage.

"We are constantly looking at creative, non-opioid approaches to treating pain," said Ken Duckworth, MD, medical director for behavioral health. "We know many people find acupuncture to be beneficial for a number of conditions, so we're pleased to offer it as an option to our members. This could also be another step in helping to reduce the number of inappropriate opioid prescriptions being written in Massachusetts."

Since 2012, with the introduction of its Prescription Pain Medication Safety Program, Blue Cross has been a leader in Massachusetts and nationwide in helping to stem the opioid epidemic through a variety of innovative efforts focusing on education, prevention, treatment, and recovery. Blue Cross is a founding member of RIZE Massachusetts, which seeks to build a $50 million fund focused on bringing real and lasting change to those struggling with substance use disorders in the Commonwealth. In 2018, Blue Cross made a quarter-million-dollar investment in an innovative, peer-to-peer opioids education program called Drug Story Theater and also became the first health plan in the state to provide opioid toolkits for employer customers. The kits, designed to be kept in the workplace, contain two doses of Narcan nasal spray, a surgical mask and gloves, and instructions on administering Narcan. Additionally, Blue Cross has removed co-pays for Narcan for most fully insured plan designs and has provided $1 million in grants to fund the growth and development of the recovery coach workforce in Massachusetts.

Blue Cross members with acupuncture coverage can find in-network, licensed acupuncturists using the Find a Doctor tool available on the BCBSMA website and MyBlue app. Blue Cross has been building its acupuncture network over the past several months and will continue working closely with the acupuncture community to increase the number of contracted providers.

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 are committed to the relentless pursuit of quality, affordable health care *with* an unparalleled consumer experience. Consistent with our promise to always put our members first, we are rated among the nation's best health plans for member satisfaction and quality. Connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn.

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