Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Expands Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

Health plan deploys more than 100 employees to Community Tracing Collaborative and Boston Hope field hospital; provides more than 5,000 meals a week to address food insecurity; and plans blood drive

BOSTON, April 28, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts is making a critical public health contribution by re-deploying a portion of its employees to work with the Community Tracing Collaborative and Boston Hope field hospital, two key elements of the state's COVID-19 response.

"These two public health efforts are crucial to stemming the spread of the virus and saving lives," said Andrew Dreyfus, president and CEO of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts. "As a locally based not-for-profit health plan, we have a significant role to play in supporting the community through this crisis. We're proud to lend our greatest resource -- our talented and compassionate employees -- to the collaborative and to support patients at Boston Hope."

The company, which made a $2 million commitment to COVID-19 relief efforts earlier this month, also today announced it will provide 5,000 meals a week for those in need and host a blood drive for area hospitals.

COVID-19 Community Tracing Collaborative
More than 100 Blue Cross employees will be temporarily re-deployed as contact tracers for the Boston-based global health nonprofit Partners in Health at the collaborative. Contact tracers will call Massachusetts residents who have been in contact with people infected with COVID-19 and support them through quarantine. This work has played an important role in successful COVID-control programs in other countries, and the collaborative is in the process of hiring at least 1,000 people.

"Because the needs of our business have changed temporarily during the pandemic, we are redirecting these employees to this critical work, which Gov. Baker has said will be vital to reopening the state and the economy," said Rich Lynch, chief operating officer at Blue Cross. "The addition of these highly trained, experienced call center associates will help jump-start this incredibly important public health initiative."

Boston Hope
Fifteen Blue Cross registered nurses are supporting the care of patients at the Boston Hope field hospital seven days a week, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. The facility, now operating in the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center, provides care to low acuity COVID-19 patients to ensure beds in Boston hospitals are available for the most serious coronavirus cases and other critical patients.

The Blue Cross nurses are managing discharge planning to ensure patients have medication, supplies, caregiver support and access to nutritious food after hospitalization. Seven Blue Cross behavioral health clinicians are on call for consults if patients need mental or emotional health support.

"Discharge planning is a critical component of any care plan and it's especially crucial during this pandemic, given the public health concerns," said Kathy Gardner, vice president of clinical operations and Blue Cross. "The work our nurses are doing will help prevent the spread of the virus, reduce hospital readmissions and most importantly, help the patients regain their health."

Addressing food insecurity
Together with its food service vendor, Flik, Blue Cross will provide 5,000 meals a week to nonprofit partners that address food security in Boston and along the South Shore. Flik workers in Blue Cross cafeterias in the company's Hingham and Quincy offices will prepare 1,000 boxed meals a day. The meals will be distributed daily by the nonprofits to the vulnerable populations they serve.

"With businesses shuttered and unemployment rising, organizations that meet basic needs like nutrition are seeing a huge increase in demand for their services," said Jeff Bellows, vice president of corporate citizenship at Blue Cross. "Thanks to the creativity of our corporate real estate and facilities teams and our friends at Flik, we can help meet that demand by preparing and donating thousands of nutritious meals each week."

Blood drive
Blue Cross is working with the American Red Cross to help meet the critical need for whole blood, blood plasma, and platelets. Many blood drives have been canceled due to the pandemic, and blood donor centers have had to reduce capacity to adhere to social distancing guidelines. Blue Cross will hold a public blood drive at its Quincy office this spring.

About Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (www.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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For further information: Amy McHugh, amy.mchugh@bcbsma.com, 617-246-2311