Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts announces new steps to support members with substance use disorder

Adds AWARE Recovery Care to network, offers hospital incentives for recovery coach services

BOSTON, Dec. 16, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts ("Blue Cross") today announced two new initiatives designed to provide additional support to members living with substance use disorder. The company has contracted with AWARE Recovery Care (ARC) to offer qualifying Blue Cross members a best-in-class, in-home addiction treatment program designed to promote long-term engagement, prevent relapses, and re-admissions to a higher level of care. Blue Cross is also adding recovery coaches to its hospital incentive programs to encourage mental health and addiction care facilities in the Blue Cross network to provide these services.

"We're committed to finding innovative ways to support and pay for substance use disorder care," said Dr. Ken Duckworth, Blue Cross' senior medical director for behavioral health. "The COVID-19 pandemic has added new challenges for our members struggling with addiction – we want to do everything we can to make it easier for them to get the care they need."

AWARE Recovery Care

ARC delivers an intensive, in-home addiction treatment program for individuals seeking recovery from alcohol or other substances. ARC helps people "Recover Where You Live" with an emphasis on the home or transitional living environment, unique family dynamic, and the broader community around the individual.

Each client receives integrated behavioral and medical health direct care from a multi-disciplinary team that includes a psychiatric professional, a registered nurse or licensed social worker, a licensed family therapist and two certified in-home addiction treatment coaches and/or counselors who meet with the client in the home for up to a year. From in-home withdrawal management to longer-term in-home addiction treatment, the core team addresses the medical, emotional, and mental health issues required to maintain sobriety and achieve lasting recovery.

ARC also offers each client the possibility of receiving longer-term recovery care while maintaining their privacy and meeting their day-to-day responsibilities while remaining engaged at work, in school, and with their families.

"The effectiveness of the AWARE model has been validated by years of patient outcomes and more than 17 quarters of data from health insurers," said Matthew Eacott, chief operating officer at AWARE Recovery Care.

"While there's no one solution for every person dealing with addiction, the evidence is strong that the home is an excellent setting for patients seeking recovery. We are thrilled to be partnering with the innovators at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts to help provide the best possible outcomes for their members."

Behavioral Health Hospital Incentive Program

Recovery coaches are trained professionals, typically with lived experience, who provide peer support to those in treatment and recovery for substance use disorder. Their services span a wide breadth, from treatment navigation to social re-integration. A University of Massachusetts Medical School report funded by RIZE Massachusetts found that the use of recovery coaches yields promising results for those with opioid use disorder.

In 2019, as part of its ongoing commitment to addressing the opioid epidemic, Blue Cross provided $1 million in grants to support the growth and standardization of recovery coaches in Massachusetts. As a continuation of this work, Blue Cross is adding recovery coaches to its Behavioral Health Hospital Incentive Program (BHHIP), allowing all eligible hospitals and facilities the opportunity to receive additional financial support for offering recovery coach programs.

"We know recovery coaches can help improve outcomes for individuals in recovery," said Duckworth. "We'll continue to urge providers coming to us seeking innovative payment arrangements to include Recovery Coaches as part of their care teams, and as the state moves towards a certification process for recovery coaches, we will continue to explore additional ways to support this important part of the team."

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 substance use 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 to reverse an overdose.

About Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (bluecrossma.org) 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.

SOURCE Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts

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