$5,000 Wellness Grant Awarded to City of New Bedford

Innovative program recognized by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts

BOSTON, May 10, 2017 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The City of New Bedford is one of twoMassachusetts municipalities recognized by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts for innovating new and comprehensive approaches to improve the health of its employees. The 2017 Municipal Health Innovation Award includes a $5,000 award.

New Bedford is being honored in part for joining Blue Cross to create a first-of-its-kind Municipal Health Collaborative to develop creative, measurable, and personal health interventions for employees at risk of or diagnosed with diabetes. The multi-year effort; which brings together the city, employees, Blue Cross, health care providers, and the broader community; is designed to prevent New Bedford city employees from becoming at-risk for diabetes, and preventing those already at risk from developing the disease.

"There is now clear evidence that diabetes can be controlled if a person knows the risk factors for the disease, appreciates the potential consequences if it is left unchecked, and are educated on how to handle their condition if diagnosed," said Sandra Vezina, Director of Personnel for the city ofNew Bedford . "That's why we're joining the Municipal Health Collaborative as part of our comprehensive health and wellness program - to ensure our employees are as healthy as they can be."

According to the American Diabetes Association:

- Diabetes was the seventh leading cause of death in America in 2010
- Almost 10% of the population is diagnosed with diabetes in 2012
- The disease cost the country $245 billion in direct medical cost and lost productivity in 2012

New Bedford and its employees were also recognized by Blue Cross for a number of other programs designed to improve the health of city workers including; walking programs, ergonomic seminars, annual health and wellness fairs that include health screenings and healthy eating demonstrations.

"New Bedford is a great example of an employer committed to improving the wellbeing of its employees," saidMark Meunier, Director of Government Programs at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts. "We're proud to support that robust commitment and the collaboration between the City of New Bedford and its employees to improve the health of all city workers. These programs have the potential to reduce health care costs, saving tax payer dollars."

The $5000 grant will be used by New Bedford to fund and support lifestyle interventions for employees.

The town of Ware also won a 2017 Municipal Health Innovation Award.

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 25,000Massachusetts 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.

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