Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Supports Seniors During COVID-19 Pandemic

Health plan expedites access to care and provides additional support to its Medicare members

BOSTON, May 20, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (Blue Cross), is promoting the health and well-being of seniors during the COVID-19 public health emergency by expanding access to telephone and virtual care, waiving costs on COVID-19 related treatment, and more.

"We want our Medicare members to know we're here for them during this incredibly challenging time," said Ken Arruda, vice president for Medicare markets at Blue Cross. "Our members' health, safety, and ability to get the care they need are our top priorities. We're here to provide seniors with important information on changes to their Medicare benefits, answers to questions about seeking health care services and treatment, and regular advice from our expert clinicians on ways to stay healthy and safe."

Since early March, Blue Cross has taken steps to expedite access to care and provide additional support to Medicare members for the duration of the Massachusetts public health emergency. Enhanced benefits include waiving member costs for:

- COVID-19 testing when ordered by a doctor or other health care provider
- Medically necessary COVID-19 treatment at doctor's offices, ERs, and urgent care centers for members in our Medicare Advantage, Managed Blue for Seniors and Medex®' plans, in accordance with CDC and Massachusetts Department of Public Health guidelines
- Inpatient treatment of COVID-19
- Telephone and video visits with clinicians about any health care matter so members can see their doctors from the comfort and safety of their homes for the duration of the Massachusetts public health emergency
- Members who receive COVID-19 treatment from out-of-network providers. For all other out-of-network treatment, Medicare Advantage members will only have to pay their in-network cost-share amount. Medex Choice and Managed Blue for Seniors will have to play applicable out-of-network costs for all non-COVID-19 services.

Additionally, Blue Cross prescription drug plan members can get early refills of maintenance medications with a valid prescription, including a 30-day supply at a retail pharmacy or a 90-day supply through mail order.

Blue Cross clinicians advise seniors to take the following steps to address ongoing and new health care concerns during the public health emergency:

- **If you have a chronic condition,** stay in contact with your health care provider by phone or video to manage your condition, and continue taking your medications - many pharmacies now offer prescription delivery services, so you don't have to leave your home.
- **If you are feeling lonely, sad, anxious or isolated**, you can speak with a therapist via phone or video link – find out how.
- **If you notice new symptoms**, call your health care provider. You can also call the Blue Cross Nurse Care Line at 1-888-247Blue (2583). This service is provided at no cost to members. Common COVID-19 symptoms include fever, shortness of breath, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, unexplained fatigue, confusion, and loss of taste or smell.
- **If you are experiencing a life-threatening emergency,** call 911 and go to your local emergency department. Please note that emergency departments remain open during this time and often are kept separate from areas with COVID-19 patients to minimize the spread of the virus. Clinicians are available to treat you.

Blue Cross' Medicare member services team is available to address questions and concerns between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., Monday through Friday, at (888)494-8333. Additional information can be found in the Blue Cross Coronavirus Resource Center.

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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