Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts and Community Health Centers Begin Offering Free Rides to Boost COVID Vaccine Access

Lyft partnership, an inbound call center, and health center grants will support underserved communities and vulnerable populations

BOSTON, March 25, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts ("Blue Cross"), the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers ("the League"), and Lyft will begin offering access to transportation to and from COVID-19 vaccination sites across the state as part of their joint effort to help provide equitable access to vaccinations. Blue Cross and the League last month announced their plans to address barriers to COVID vaccine access, with a focus on low- and middle-income populations served by community health centers ("CHCs"). A $1 million contribution from Blue Cross is expected to fund thousands of free rides to vaccine appointments in underserved communities, including communities of color.



"Community health centers are preparing for an influx of people seeking vaccination appointments as eligibility is expanded in the coming weeks," said Michael Curry, president and CEO of the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers and a member of the state's COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Group. "Transportation is a challenge in many of the communities that have been hardest hit by the pandemic. This program is helping to bridge that gap with safe, free options for getting to and from vaccine appointments."

The initiative is being rolled out in phases and will support patients' transportation needs in a variety of ways including grants to CHCs, a partnership with Lyft, and a Blue Cross-staffed call center for requesting rides by phone. The program is expected to be fully operational before April 19, when all Massachusetts residents are eligible for COVID vaccines.

"We've built a customized program to help meet the unique needs of community health center patients across the state," Andrew Dreyfus, Blue Cross' president and CEO. "In collaboration with Lyft, we're proud to help support critical transportation needs as more people become eligible to receive COVID vaccinations in Massachusetts."

Lyft Pass
Twenty-three of the state's CHCs have expressed interest in offering rideshare vouchers to their patients in need of transportation. As part of this initiative, each of these CHCs can distribute a Lyft Pass to patients to get to and from their COVID-19 vaccination appointments. The ride pass is redeemable through the Lyft rider app.

Lyft Concierge & Blue Cross Call Center
Starting in early April, Blue Cross will also staff an inbound call center to request rides on behalf of CHC patients who do not have access to a smartphone or bank account, through Lyft's Concierge platform. The call center will operate Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and will support patients in multiple languages.

Community Health Center Grants
Blue Cross has also provided initial $2,500 grants to 46 CHCs across the state to support transportation programs currently underway or in development at each organization. Additional funding will be available as the program continues.

CHCs may use the grants to:

- Fund rides within an existing transportation platform their organization already leverages, including rideshare or taxi partnerships
- Hire additional drivers to expand the scope of in-house programs such as shuttle services

- Launch or grow a volunteer-based solution
- Support any other transportation related programming that best meet the needs of patients

Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, Blue Cross and its Foundation have committed nearly$13 million in the community via financial contributions, pro bono, and in-kind contributions. For more information on how Blue Cross is supporting its members during the COVID-19 public health emergency, visit the company's Coronavirus Resource Center.

About Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (www.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.

About the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers
The Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers (the League) is a 501 (c)(3) membership organization supporting and representing the Commonwealth's 52 community health centers, which offer primary and preventive care to more than one million residents. The League serves as an information resource on community-based primary care to policymakers, opinion leaders, and the media. It provides a wide range of technical assistance to its health center members, including advocacy on health policy issues, support for workforce development, clinical care and technology initiatives, and guidance to state leaders and community-based organizations seeking to open health centers.

About Lyft Healthcare
Lyft Healthcare is one of the largest providers of non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) services in the United States, ensuring access to reliable rides for millions of eligible patients who lack transportation. Thousands of healthcare organizations partner with Lyft Healthcare — including nine of the top 10 NEMT managers, nine of the top 10 health systems, the top 10 health plans, large retail pharmacy chains, and key healthcare IT organizations like Epic and Allscripts — to reduce costs, improve the patient experience, and expand access to care. Additionally, Lyft is eligible to provide access to transportation for up to 37 million eligible Medicaid beneficiaries across 14 states and the District of Columbia.

SOURCE Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts

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