Blue Cross Blue Shield Of Massachusetts Makes Website Available In Five Additional Languages

Company also launches Spanish-language call center

BOSTON, May 19, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts ("Blue Cross") is making its website available in five additional languages - Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Chinese (Simplified), and Vietnamese - in an effort to better serve its diverse membership. The initiative is part of a broader company-wide commitment to champion racial justice and address health disparities in health care.



"For many of our members, the website is the first places they seek information," said Ryan O'Donnell, vice president of Member, Account and Provider Service at Blue Cross. "Our job is to remove any barriers between our members and the care they need and taking this step to minimize language barriers is one important way we're doing that."

The multi-phase translation plan began this month with the public Blue Cross website, including pages with information about health plans, mental health and substance use disorder resources, COVID-19 support, and more.

"Health care must be inclusive and accessible for diverse populations," said Tonya Webster, vice president and consumer experience officer at Blue Cross. "Making our resources for members available in several other languages is an example of our company-wide commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, and it also demonstrates our focus on consumer experience for all our members."

Language selection

To determine which languages would be most useful for members, Blue Cross' Member Service team analyzed member calls and translation requests as well as broad member demographic trends, and identified Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Chinese, and Vietnamese as initial priorities. The team will continue to review data and assess members' needs to determine what additional supports may be needed in the future.

Spanish-language call center now available

Also as part of Blue Cross' efforts to address disparities in health care, the company launched a fully in-house Spanish-language member call center on March 1. While multiple languages have always been available to members with the support of a language line partner, the catalyst to bring the service in-house was an employee suggestion at a company forum on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Approximately 80% of incoming calls requesting translation services are for Spanish.

"Translation service is about more than just answering a member's question in their desired language - it's also about being able to express empathy," said Vicki Tantillo, a senior manager in Member Service who helped launch the call center. "By bringing Spanish translation in-house, our team members can be more authentic in addressing members' needs and helping them solve whatever challenge they're facing."

In its first month, the Spanish-language call center team fielded more than 900 calls, all of which would otherwise have been diverted to a third-party language line. As the service evolves, the Member Service team hopes to also begin responding to member emails and social media questions in Spanish and exploring other language support options.

Broader efforts to address health inequities

Other ways Blue Cross is working to address racial inequities and health disparities include:

- Investing in organizations that are advancing racial and social justice. The company contributed$1 million to the New Commonwealth Fund for Racial Equity and Social Justice and awarded $350,000 in new Racial Equity and Justice Grants to six nonprofits led by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).
- Collecting comprehensive, member-level race and ethnicity data that can be used to collaborate with the community and clinical partners to reduce racial and ethnic inequities. Blue Cross is the first health plan in the region to undertake this comprehensive effort.
- Joining the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce Pacesetters program, an ambitious collaborative initiative that seeks to close the racial wealth gap in one generation by partnering with businesses of color.
- Continuing to build an inclusive company culture by further educating Blue Cross leaders about understanding and eliminating bias in hiring decisions and management practices, broadening cultural competency education for all employees to enhance awareness of unconscious bias and micro-aggressions, adding Juneteenth to the corporate holiday calendar, and more.

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, equitable and 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.BlueLinks for Employers

BlueLinks for Providers
BlueLinks for Brokers
Get Blue MA
Blue Cross Foundation

MASSACHUSETTS

SOURCE Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts

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

---

Additional assets available online: Photos (1)