BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF MASSACHUSETTS WINS PRESTIGIOUS BRAND INNOVATION AWARD FOR REDUCING BARRIERS TO MENTAL HEALTH

Blue Cross Blue Shield Association honor recognizes innovations that provide measurable impact to consumers and customers

BOSTON – August 30, 2023 – Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts ("Blue Cross") announced today that it has received the Brand Innovation Award from the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association (BCBSA) for its work on improving access to mental health care through provider network expansion and personalized, digital navigation tools to help members better understand their care options. The annual award recognizes exemplary efforts across the Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS) System that have made a significant and measurable impact on its members and the BCBS brand.

Blue Cross MA was recognized for its Mental Health Advocate Program, designed to reduce barriers to mental health care and improve consumer experience. The health plan assembled an internal team of clinical experts and created the program to expand care options, help navigate members to the right clinicians and provide ongoing care management support.

"Mental health care has never been more critical. While we have further to go in making sure everyone gets the care they need when they need it, we're proud of the depth and creativity of the mental health program our company has built," said Sarah Iselin, Blue Cross' president and CEO. "We are honored by this recognition of the important work we're doing to increase access to mental health services and support our members throughout their journey."

Blue Cross' mental health provider network has grown by 50% over the past five years, and now includes more than 18,000 clinicians. In the last two years, Blue Cross has also added several additional specialty care options focused on kids and teens, addiction, culturally affirming care, and specific diagnoses like OCD.

Additional highlights surrounding Blue Cross' ongoing work to enhance members' access to quality mental health care include:

- Reimbursing telehealth sessions performed by mental health specialists at the same rate as in-person visits. This includes both video and telephonic telehealth services.
- Developing and implementing a Child Psychiatry Incentive program, increasing the number of child psychologists in Blue Cross' network by 46%.
- Offering financial incentives for primary care physicians to integrate mental health care into their practices with the goal of improving members' physical and mental health outcomes.
- Expanding access to an innovative online program, Learn to Live, to help members better manage anxiety and stress.
- Offering exclusive member discounts on classes that support mindfulness and wellness, including yoga and meditation.

"Nearly one in three Americans trust the Blue Cross and Blue Shield brand to provide affordable, accessible and high-quality health care coverage," said Sean Robbins, BCBSA executive vice president and chief corporate affairs officer. "We are proud to recognize Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts and their innovative Mental Health Advocacy Program for seamlessly connecting members to mental health providers and improving the online care experience."

This marks the 28th year that BCBSA has presented the Brand Innovation Award to recognize BCBS companies nationwide in

categories that promote integrated, affordable health care, healthier lives, and market leadership.

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 and equitable 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 Blue Cross Blue Shield Association
The Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association is a national federation of 34 independent, community-based and locally operated Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies that collectively provide health care coverage for one in three Americans.
